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ABSTRACT

Various articles include the following concerns: a year-long study shows that 66 books about Asian Americans are elitist, racist, and sexist; practical guidelines for selection of nonracist, nonsexist books are provided; a noted playwright looks at the image of Asian Americans in children's books and finds it racist science fiction; the demystification of textbooks that juxtapose distortions of Asian American history alongside with statements of historical reality is stressed; a member of the California Textbook Legal Compliance Committee reveals how community groups judge textbooks and tells how publishers can improve the treatment of Asian Americans in texts, and books and other resources to aid to counteract the prevailing myths and stereotypes about Asian Americans are recommended. Regular departments such as illustrator's showcase and information exchange are included, and a new bulletin department covering the electronic media is presented for the first time. (Author/AM)

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INTERRACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

# BULLETIN

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VOLUME 7 NUMBERS 2 & 3, 1976

SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE

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## Asian Americans in Children's Books

INTERRACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

# BULLETIN

VOLUME 7, NUMBERS 2 & 3 1976

## SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE: ASIAN AMERICANS IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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*The illustration by Tomie Arai shows aspects of the Asian American experience not generally known to other Americans. Shown in the side panels are scenes depicting Asian American participation in U.S. history, their resistance to oppression, the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II and the changing roles of women.*

*Portions of this issue are being published simultaneously in Bridge magazine.*

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# How Children's Books Distort the Asian American Image

Eleven Asian American book reviewers were asked by the Council on Interracial Books for Children to find, read and analyze all children's books on Asian American themes currently in print or in use in schools and libraries. These reviewers formed the Asian American Children's Book Project to evaluate the books and identify those titles which could be used effectively in educational programs. The reviewers were also asked to indicate books that seemed particularly inaccurate or demeaning in their portrayal of Asian American children.

The decision was made to limit the study to children's books in which one or more central characters are Asian American. A total of 66 books fit this requirement and were evaluated in the study.

Although "Asian American" technically includes Americans of all Far Eastern (including East Indian), Southeast Asian and Pacific backgrounds, the reviewers were able to locate children's books in only some of the categories. The 66 books are mainly about Americans of Chinese and Japanese ancestry, breaking down as follows:

- **Chinese American:** 30 books
- **Japanese American:** 27 books
- **Korean American:** 2 books
- **Vietnamese American:** 2 books
- **General:** 5 books

The **general** books consist of three that depict more than one Asian American group, one about a white boy reared in China and another about a Japanese boy's experience in a Canadian prison camp (the last two books were considered relevant to the study).

The books were published between 1945 and 1975, with the greatest number appearing in the early 1970's. An average of one book a year appeared from 1945 to 1964, and there was then an increase to roughly five a year. The peak years were 1970 (seven books), 1972 (seven books) and 1974 (eight books), with a drop in 1975 (four books).

The major conclusion was that, with one or perhaps two exceptions, the 66 books are racist, sexist and elitist, and that the image of Asian Americans they present is grossly misleading. A succinct definition of the image presented would be: Asian Americans are foreigners who all look alike and choose to live together in quaint communities in the midst of large cities and cling to "outworn," alien customs. In addition to presenting this offensive image, the books are flawed in one or more of the following ways:

*Alan Okada*

- They misrepresent Asian American cultures, emphasizing exotic festivals, ancient superstitions and costumes and, by contrast (stated or unstated), boost the American Way of Life.
- They promote the myth of Asian Americans as a "model minority," with the myth serving as a smokescreen to conceal the realities of white racism. It also serves as a divisive tactic to effectively alienate "hard-working" Asian Americans from other minorities by implying that the latter, too, would "make it" if they only worked harder.
- They give the misleading notion that hard work, education (in particular, learning to speak English correctly) and a low profile will overcome adversity and necessarily lead to success.
- They measure success by the extent to which Asian Americans have assimilated white middle-class attitudes and values.

As in previous Council studies, the project found that far too many children's books defining a Third World experience are written by whites. Of the 66 books, only 11 were written by 7 authors of Asian American background—constituting one-sixth of the total.

Reviews of all of the 66 books—grouped by age within each cultural category—appear on pages 6-23. The criteria used to analyze the books, which readers can apply to any new book on Asian American themes, appear on page 4.

Members of the Asian American Children's Book Project wrote the following preface to the reviews.

## STATEMENT OF COMMITTEE

A major criticism we have of the books reviewed is, on the one hand, their failure to depict Asian American culture as distinct from Asian culture or some "Oriental" stereotype of it, or on the other, as distinct from the culture of white America. In particular, the books put undue emphasis on the Confucian cultural tradition. The unfortunate nature of this emphasis is clear when we bear in mind that Confucianism was an elitist social philosophy. Officially sanctioned in the past by the state, it was based on the concept that a hierarchy should determine how the mass of Chinese should live. In specifying higher status for men than for women, Confucianism sanctioned forced marriage, female slavery, educational underdevelopment for women and concubinage. These practices are romanticized in children's books, with authors erroneously assuming that Asian and Asian American families of today still live according to the old Confucian model.

Confucianism was a reality in Asia not too long ago, and its remnants are still in effect in many Asian countries. But in a large part of Asia, conditions—especially for women—have changed dramatically. It is, therefore, vitally important for chil-

# CRITERIA FOR ANALYZING BOOKS ON ASIAN AMERICANS

**A CHILDREN'S BOOK ABOUT ASIAN AMERICANS SHOULD REFLECT THE REALITIES AND WAY-OF-LIFE OF AN ASIAN AMERICAN PEOPLE.**

- Does the book portray an Asian American group as imitation white Americans? As imitation Asians? Or as people from a distinct Asian culture whose experiences in the U.S. have generated a new and unique Asian American culture?
- Are the settings, behavior, speech, clothing, etc., depicted accurately for the historical period and cultural context of the story? Are illustrations accurate and culturally consistent? Are the characters in the story from a variety of social and economic levels?
- Does the plot exaggerate the "exoticism" or "mysticism" of Asian or Asian American culture—in particular, customs and festivals? Does the story give the impression that such events as the Chinese New Year or the Japanese *O-bon* festival are the touchstones of Asian American identity, compressing the essence of an entire culture into a single holiday ritual? Or are these festivals put into perspective through depiction of typical, everyday activities?

**A CHILDREN'S BOOK ABOUT ASIAN AMERICANS SHOULD TRANSCEND STEREOTYPES.**

- Are problems confronted and handled by the Asian American protagonist, or does a successful outcome depend on the leadership, good will or benevolent intervention of a white person?
- If the story is about a conflict between two cultures ("traditional" Asian culture versus "modern" American culture, for instance), does the protagonist have to make an all-or-nothing choice between the two? Are any alternatives to the all-or-nothing choice expressed or considered?
- Are the characters docile, uncomplaining, one-dimensional? Or do they display a full range of human emotions?
- Does the book focus exclusively on the alienation and victimization of the Asian American characters? Does the reader sense their spirit, individuality, humor, strength and drive? Or are they depicted as working so hard to "make it" in white society that they come across as dehumanized?
- Is there obvious occupational stereotyping? Are Japanese Americans gardeners and florists? Do Chinese Americans work in restaurants, laundries and curio shops? If they do, is the historical racism responsible for limited occupational roles explained?
- Are the names and speech of the characters authentic, or do they (like Gilbert and Sullivan's "Nanki-Poo") parody real Asian names and speech patterns? Does the characters' way of talking call to mind the "Confucius-say," stilted speech syndrome? Do the characters speak in hyperbolized eloquence or with confused r's and l's?

**A CHILDREN'S BOOK ABOUT ASIAN AMERICANS SHOULD SEEK TO RECTIFY HISTORICAL DISTORTIONS AND OMISSIONS.**

- Does the book suggest that Chinese immigrants were attracted to the U.S. predominantly by the California Gold Rush? Or does it say that they were actively recruited by agents of U.S. business interests? Is mention made of floods, famine, poverty and other conditions in China which caused the emigration?
- Does the book depict systematic oppression and legalized exclusion of Asian Americans? Is that oppression described as an "unfortunate chapter" in U.S. history? Is it attributed to the isolated acts of a few bigots? Is it relegated to the past or described as a continuing and ever present reality? If oppression is described, does the book also mention Asian American resistance?
- Are the historical achievements of Asian Americans—Chinese construction of the transcontinental railroad and the land relocation of the Japanese in California, for example—measured according to how much they "contribute" to white American society or are they valued as accomplishments in their own right?
- Is the internment of 110,000 Japanese Americans in concentration camps during World War II dismissed as an unfortunate consequence of war hysteria? Or is it placed in a historical context of systematic racist oppression which was extremely profitable to many white Californians?

See the article on page 26 for additional information.

**A CHILDREN'S BOOK ABOUT ASIAN AMERICANS SHOULD AVOID THE "MODEL" MINORITY AND "SUPER" MINORITY SYNDROMES.**

- Is the Asian American experience in the U.S. interpreted as a "success" story? Is the impression given that Asian Americans have overcome the early oppression against them by dint of hard work, turning the other cheek and passively accepting hardship? Is such behavior presented as a "model" for other minorities to emulate?
- Are characters in the story respected on their own terms, or must they display outstanding abilities, skills or talents in order to gain the approval and esteem of white Americans? Are they portrayed as super-learners? Are they super-industrious? And, of course, are they super-polite?

**A CHILDREN'S BOOK ABOUT ASIAN AMERICANS SHOULD REFLECT AN AWARENESS OF THE CHANGING STATUS OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY.**

- Do girls and women in the story conform to the "China Doll" stereotype? Are young girls excessively sweet, accommodating, proper? Do they excel in flower or food arranging?
- How about older women? Are they all portrayed as extremely overbearing and demanding in relationships with others and, in particular, with children?
- Is it evident that the author is aware of the oppressive nature of sexism? Does the author provide role models for girls other than the ancient Confucian model? If women are depicted solely in male-dominated relationships, do they—or does anyone else in the story—note or criticize the subservient nature of their role? Are there other ways in which the author confronts or questions sexism in the story?

**A CHILDREN'S BOOK ABOUT ASIAN AMERICANS SHOULD CONTAIN ART AND PHOTOS WHICH ACCURATELY REFLECT THE RACIAL DIVERSITY OF ASIAN AMERICANS.**

- Are Asian Americans all look-alikes (with bowl haircuts, Fu Manchu mustaches, mandarin jackets)? Are Asian Americans shown to have a wide variety of skin tones (*not* garish yellow à la *Five Chinese Brothers*). Are people drawn as caricatures with exaggerated features like slanted or closed eyes, buck teeth, myopic vision? Is body language stereotyped (bowed heads, downcast eyes, sheepish grins)? Are girls *"China Dolls"*?
- Is clothing appropriate to the activity and occasion or are children in "traditional" clothing when they would more likely wear jeans, for example)? Is clothing appropriate to the culture depicted?
- Are the settings stereotyped (the standard "exotic Chinatown" scenes)? Does the artist rely on "props" to define a culture (chopsticks, paper lanterns, dragons, kites, etc.)?
- If the story includes scenes in China or Japan, are they accurately or inappropriately dated and/or stereotyped (old China when contemporary China should be depicted)?

**NOTE:** Examine closely the author's perspective to determine whether he/she has a hidden agenda. Any book, including one by an Asian American, can transmit covert messages favoring one group or value system at the expense of another. Any author, Asian American or not, can internalize the myths and stereotypes of white society.

dren to learn that oppression is not irrevocable and that when people recognize and struggle against it, change is possible.

Blatant forms of racism, sexism and elitism are also to be found in the books. This was not unexpected, but since the civil rights movement brought about a consciousness that did not exist ten years ago, we expected that the newer children's books would at least confront these issues. We were disappointed that so few books even tried.

In our view, there is nothing more confusing and damaging to children than a book which criticizes racism and/or sexism but, in conclusion, offers the comfort that American ideals of "decency" and "fair play" will eventually overcome them. The message conveyed by such books is that active opposition or rebellion are not necessary or desirable, even when groups have been historically victimized.

The American system today maintains racism and sexism for its economic advantage. We want people to view and evaluate racism and sexism, not as isolated phenomena, but as part of—and caused by—this inequitable social and economic system. Hence, we feel that when a book grapples with such issues, it should encourage young people to confront and struggle against oppression.

We do not believe that a book can stand in isolation from the background and perspective of its author and/or illustrator, nor apart from the social climate of the period in which it is written. We believe that the content of every book is shaped by an author's or illustrator's values and assumptions about life. Our study indicates that while Asian American authors are more likely to be sensitive to the problems and struggles of their people, ethnicity in and of itself is no assurance of a book's worth or authenticity. The books which come closest to meeting our criteria—*Dragonwings* by the Chinese American Lawrence Yep, and those of Taro Yashima, a Japanese American—combine both artistry and authenticity. On the other hand, according to the same criteria, books written by Asian Americans rank among some of the most offensive on our list. In her book *Chinese in America,* Betty Lee Sung has shown the extent to which an Asian American's perceptions can be distorted by the myths and stereotypes of white American society.

The fine line between stereotyping and authenticity is often hard to see. In most cases, the former draws upon the latter as a base, exploiting and vulgarizing it, and frequently a stereotype escapes notice altogether because it is so subtle. Certain stereotypes become even more "acceptable" to white America than reality, forming the basis of distorted generalizations about a people, their culture, traditions, attitudes and history.

## "LOADED" WORDS AND IMAGES TO AVOID

Over the years, the use of certain adjectives and images to describe Asian Americans (and Asians) has projected and reinforced offensive stereotypes. It is necessary to be particularly sensitive to "loaded" words, images and situations which suggest that many, most or all Asian Americans or Asians are:

- smiling, calm, serene, quiet, shy, reserved, peaceful
- short, stocky, small, buck-toothed, myopic, delicate, stunted
- excessively obedient, passive, stolid, docile, unquestioning, overly accommodating
- menial (the waiter-houseboy-cook syndrome), servile (as shown through repeated bows), subservient, submissive
- artistic, mystical, inscrutable, philosophical, sagacious
- quick, dexterous, expert in martial arts
- exotic "foreigners" (even unto the second, third or later generations), faceless hordes, or a "Yellow Peril"
- sinister, sly, evil, cunning, crafty, cruel or a people who place little value on human life

All the children's books reviewed in our study were published by establishment or commercial publishing houses. We believe more books by community groups and organizations exist which provide positive images of Asian Americans and which are anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-elitist. We would like to share these materials with others and ask community organizations to let us know if they are available and how they may be obtained. Write The Asian American Children's Book Project, c/o CIBC, 1841 Broadway, N.Y., N.Y. 10023

## HELPFUL HINTS FOR ARTISTS, ART DIRECTORS AND BOOK EDITORS

To show diversity and avoid the common stereotypes outlined in the criteria (page 4), we suggest:

- When preparing illustrations, artists should work with Asian American models, or, at least, with good, accurate color photos. Note differences in facial structures between individuals and between Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, Filipino Americans, etc. Note especially the variations in Asian American eyes; they are definitely not slanted and without pupils (slits).
- Note the wide variety in the skin color of peoples of Asian background, ranging from white to black. Shades of brown or tan are much more realistic than the stereotypical bright yellow so often used.
- Research to insure that clothing is culturally accurate and appropriate. Some aspects of "dress codes" may not be readily apparent to a non-Asian American.
- Look at contemporary art and photos by Asians and Asian Americans. Books, magazines and posters from Asian countries are available at China Books and Periodicals, a bookstore that has branches in Los Angeles and New York City, and can be most helpful.
- Do not confuse scenes of pagoda roofs or ancient emperors' courts with either the total reality of the past or with how Asian countries look today.
- Choose photos that show a variety of Asian American realities appropriate to the book. A crowded street scene in Chinatown may be "real," but to show only that reality in picture book after picture book only confirms stereotypes.

# CHINESE AMERICAN

## Picture Books

### The Cable Car and the Dragon

by Herb Caen,
illustrated by Barbara Ninde Byfield.
Doubleday, 1972,
$4.95, 26 pages, grades p.s.-2

This picture book capitalizes on two of San Francisco's most famous tourist attractions—the cable car and Chinatown. As such, it is more a beautifully illustrated advertisement for San Francisco and the San Francisco *Chronicle* (the newspaper for which the author writes a daily column) than a children's book.

This is a fantasy about Charlie, a bored and exploited cable car who jumps his tracks one day to see Chinatown, meets Chin Chin Chow, the Chinese New Year dragon, and takes him for a joy ride. The book is superficial and without redeeming social relevance.

The book is also racist throughout. The dragon's name derogates authentic Chinese names since it has no real meaning and sounds as though three sounds had been arbitrarily thrown together. The book's illustrations stereotypically portray smiling Fu Manchu-type figures with their hands stuck into the sleeves of their mandarin jackets, as well as a few kimono-clad women and an Indian in full headdress. (Some of the Asian and other minority faces are, however, fairly represented.)

Generally, the author's perceptions of the Chinese are strictly tourist-oriented; Chinatown is not shown as a community where *people* live, but as a place to go and gawk.

### Charley Yee's New Year

by Juanita B. Anderson,
illustrated by Dave Bhang.
Follett, 1970,
$1.95, 32 pages, grades p.s.-3

Another book on the overworked Chinese New Year theme. In this instance, seven-year-old Charley of San Francisco's Chinatown must repay a $3.15 debt by the New Year or else suffer "the shame of losing face." (It is unlikely that a second generation Chinese American would feel this way.)

Foo Chew, a local merchant who is getting too old to wave his pole at neighborhood children and chase them away from his ducks, hires Charley to perform this task. At story's end, "Charley Yee waved the pole and yelled fiercely at the venturing shadows" of the children. "Tomorrow night he would go and pay his debt. All the world looked as bright and gay as a Chinese lantern." One shudders at the fact that Charley can only earn money by acting as the neighborhood "scarecrow."

Charley's uncle and Sing Fat (another merchant) are depicted in mandarin jacket and *gua pi mao* (melon skin caps), the likes of which this reviewer has yet to see in any Chinese American community on a normal day.

### Fly High, Fly Low

written and illustrated
by Don Freeman. Viking, 1957,
$3.50, 56 pages, grades p.s.-3

This is a witty, warm book with an anti-conformist message—if you have a good idea, carry it out even in the face of ridicule. It was written nearly 20 years ago, when few demands were being made of children's books that they be culturally relevant. It is a fanciful and fun animal story, no more. The images of Mr. Ai Lee, the kind Chinese man who feeds the pigeons of San Francisco every day, and of the Black construction worker are pleasant and non-stereotypical. It is unfortunate that the author inadvertently perpetuates the concept of white as the standard of beauty by making the heroine a white dove—she stands out as the only white bird in the story.

### Mr. Charley's Chopsticks

by Doris P. Evans,
illustrated by Richard Cuffari.
Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1972,
$4.29, 63 pages, grades 1-3

Chopsticks have never been put to as many uses as the Wu family manages to find for them. Indeed, this story concentrates too much on the adaptability of chopsticks and not enough on the characters, although some family activity is depicted. Everyone smiles too much, parti-

cularly Mrs. Wu. Throughout the story she is shown cooking or "she jumps up and runs to the kitchen" to fetch something for the family while they are at the table.

Although chopsticks are the focal point of this story, the Wu family uses them incorrectly in some illustrations. (Also, there is no English lettering on the Chinatown signs; in reality, such signs invariably combine English and Chinese.) One wonders, at story's end, whether anyone would consider writing a story with a fork as the central theme.

### Mister Chu

by Norma Keating,
illustrated by Bernarda Bryson.
Macmillan, 1965,
$4.75, grades p.s.-3

Here is another story that makes much ado about chopsticks (this reviewer's never make a "chop choppity-chop" sound). Mr. Chu, the shopkeeper, is a thinly veiled stereotype, who wears "an old checkered cap down over one slanting eye" and a long, black silk gown with "little slits up the side."

Mr. Chu speaks pidgin English throughout the book, is always saying "Aw" or "Aw-hm" (cousins to that old racist standby "Ah-so") and is described as "brave" because he suppresses feelings of sorrow in favor of a constant, wrinkly smile. Of course, he is something of a sage. There are some nice scenes, including one in which Mr. Chu plays the Chinese banjo (*pi-po*) for Johnny, an orphan boy he has befriended, and another in which Mr. Chu and Johnny explore the subway system together.

The author gives a new twist to the New Year theme: "There was a movie camera set up to roll. Reporters had come to get the story. Chinese people have celebrated thousands of New Years." Indeed. And they will doubtless celebrate many more in children's books, newspapers and magazines, as well as in the imaginations of people who believe the word Chinese is synonymous with New Year, dragons and firecrackers. One wonders where the reporters are when Chinese Americans really need coverage.

### Moy Moy

written and illustrated
by Leo Politi. Scribner, 1960,
$5.95, grades p.s.-3

The Chinese New Year is upon us again. In this book, the story's setting could be old China rather than Los Angeles' Chinatown since the dragon parade spectators are solely and unrealistically Chinese. Furthermore, with few exceptions, most of the people are dressed in traditional garb—women in *cheongsam* or flag dress, men in mandarin collars, children sporting bowl haircuts. And almost everyone is wearing old fashioned, Chinese-style cloth shoes.

At the special children's party after the parade, Charlie, the adult in charge, "knows which toys the children like and have been wishing for." Stereotypically, boys receive "active" toys which encourage the development of skills and talents—drums, trumpets, toy horses. Girls get storybooks, fans and a "toy snake that springs at you from a box"—"passive" toys for whiling away quiet hours in a corner. Moy Moy's brothers get kites for flying; yet, when it is Moy Moy's turn, "she holds out her little hands and Charlie puts into them—a Chinese doll." Brightly colored illustrations play up the usual Chinatown exotica tourists look for and expect to find.

Mr. Politi has written at least half a dozen undistinguished children's stories about ethnic minorities. He has more than filled his quota.

### The Rice Bowl Pet

by Patricia Miles Martin,
illustrated by Ezra Jack Keats.
T.Y. Crowell, 1962,
$4.50, 30 pages, grades p.s.-3

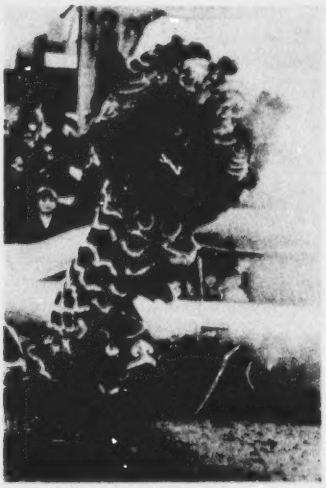
The plot is a familiar one: Faced with a challenge posed by an adult, a young boy finds a solution that is both ingenious and successful.

Unfortunately, the book is chock full of stereotypes in text and illustrations. Chinese men sport Fu Manchu-type mustaches and mandarin coats with frog closings, and characters speak pidgin English. There is also a Pekingese puppy and the biggest rice bowl this reviewer has ever seen anywhere.

### A Sky Full of Dragons

by Mildred Whatley Wright,
illustrated by Carroll Dolezal.
Steck-Vaughn, 1969,
$3.25, 32 pages, grades 1-2

How Lee Chow's grandfather helps him make friends with some American boys he sees in the park is the subject of this book.



*Dragons, dragons and more dragons are the overworked symbols of Chinese American "culture" in too many children's books. The humanity and everyday struggles of Asian Americans are obscured by such stereotypes. Details of illustrations are from (left to right)* Rice Cakes and Paper Dragons, Yellow Silk for May Lee, The Rice Bowl Pet, Chinatown Sunday *and* The Chinese Helped Build America.

*Outdated traditional dress, kite-flying and references to "the magic of China" in* Sky Full of Dragons *reinforce stereotypes of Asian American lifestyles.*

Instead of the usual chest filled with mementos from China, this grandfather's chest is filled with the "magic of China"—and much is made of that magic throughout the story. Lee Chow and his grandfather are always clothed in mandarin collars in sharp contrast to the other boys' clothing. In addition, the story constantly refers to exotic items commonly associated with "Orientals"—jade, rice paper, dragons, paper lanterns, the *Ch'ing Ming* (spring) festival, etc. Of course, Lee Chow is shy and Grandfather is wise. And the only way Lee Chow gets to play marbles with the American boys is by bringing a dragon kite in exchange.

It is obvious that the author knows little more about the Chinese than any tourist would learn from a quick tour of Chinatown.

### Soo Ling Finds a Way

by June Behrens,
illustrated by Taro Yashima.
Golden Gate, 1965,
$5.78, grades p.s.-3

This is the story of a little girl's concern for her grandfather's laundry business, which is threatened by the opening of a modern laundromat across the street.

To the author's credit, the story depicts people working together to solve a problem. Nonetheless, the plot is based on the occupational stereotype of the Chinese hand laundry (it appears that the laundromat is also owned by an Asian). Emphasis is placed on grandfather Soo's ability to "make his iron work like magic," which brings "wonder" and "smiles" to those who watch. But no reference is made to the long hours and physically exhausting labor that hand laundering entails. Rather, the reader is left with the impression that grandfather Soo is an uncomplaining "magic-maker," whose first thought at the sign of competition is to close his shop in resignation. Throughout the balance of the story, he allows others to decide his fate.

The only reference to women in the story is, "The mothers at the grocery store talked of nothing but the new laundromat," which reminds one of those mindless TV commercials showing women huddled together extolling the virtues of various detergents, toilet paper and other household items.

### The White Horse

by Edith Thacher Hurd,
illustrated by Tony Chen.
Harper & Row, 1970,
$3.50, unpaged, grades p.s.-3

This picture book tells the story of Jimmy Lee, who is quiet, withdrawn and friendless. One day, on a class trip to the zoo, Jimmy sees a beautiful white horse that none of the other children can see. Jimmy and his horse go flying all over the city. When the other children finally find Jimmy at the zoo, he silently walks away with his secret.

The story unfortunately fails to measure up to Mr. Chen's beautiful illustrations, which warmly and accurately portray various racial groups. White standards of beauty are reinforced when Jimmy claims he has "never seen a black or brown horse before, and certainly never a *beautiful white* horse" (italics added). Furthermore, Jimmy's withdrawn personality perpetuates the stereotype of Asians as reserved and passive.

The concept that the only friend a lonely boy can find is an animal promotes escapist solutions to social and/or personality problems. How does making friends with a horse resolve a boy's problem of relating to other people? Does Jimmy's fantasy about the horse symbolize his desire to be white?

Lastly, sexism is manifested in the author's assumption that all of the animals at the zoo are male.

## Juvenile and Young Adult Fiction

### China Boy

by Kay Haugaard.
Abelard-Schuman, 1971,
$4.95, grades 7-up

Seventeen-year-old Lee Sung Cheong has come to the U.S. from China after losing his parents in a flood which destroyed their village. In his efforts to earn money on the frontier to care for the younger brother and sister he left behind, Lee experiences hardship and discrimination.

To an extent, *China Boy* captures the passions, dangers and excitement of the California Gold Rush period. The author describes not only the violent racist acts and injustices committed against the Chinese, but also explores the roots of those evils: "As unemployment increased, so did the harshness of anti-Chinese sentiment. Even though many white miners were also from other countries, their physical differences were not so marked and they were not so easily identifiable as foreigners." At the same time, good and evil are not depicted as being the monopoly of one group; in the story, as in real life, these forces characterize both the majority and minority cultures.

Readers also gain insight into how myths and stereotypes evolved during the mining days: "One down-on-his-luck miner grumbled that it was an example of 'how sneaky them Chinamen are,' and even said they knew magic spells and tricks to find gold—ancient, arcane Oriental mysteries handed down from their ancestors."

Ms. Haugaard's attempt to depict the relationship between the two main characters, Lee and Hank (white), as one of equality and balance, is not altogether successful. This is particularly obvious at their parting: "Lee would miss him. He would miss his advice, his company, his talk and—yes, his protection. . . ."

Consistent with the story's late 1800's setting, the few Chinese women immigrants depicted are victims of sexism, but the author does not seem to be aware of sexism as an oppressive phenomenon. Lee is proud of Mei-Mei (his younger sister) "even though she was only a girl," and Mei-Mei has bound feet, although Lee's romantic interest, Willow, does not. Both women are bartered and sold--one as a wife and the other as a "singsong girl" in a gambling house. The author's failure to clearly place this treatment in an historical perspective could lead readers to believe that conditions are the same for Chinese American women in the seventies as they were during the last century.

*China Boy* can be used to provide a limited perspective on the life of some Chinese immigrants during the gold mining days. (This book is out of print but in use.)

### Dragonwings

by Lawrence Yep.
Harper & Row, 1975,
$6.50, 208 pages, grades 7-up

Here is a book that consciously attempts to counter Asian American stereotypes. It is the story of a talented Chinese immigrant (Windrider) and his son (Moonshadow) who, in the early 1900's, dream of building a flying machine and succeed in making their dream come true. Along with the dream they must contend with the realities of the new land—the racism of the "demons," beatings and lynchings, the harshness of life, the sacrifices and the failures. The book tries and in some ways succeeds in showing that the Chinese in America were, and are, ordinary as well as extraordinary people.

The story is told in the first person with delightful humor, as young Moonshadow reacts to the strange ways of the white "demons." Through his vision the reader learns many authentic details of life in China, where Moonshadow lived with his mother and grandmother, and of life in San Francisco's early Chinatown where Moonshadow has joined his father. Even the book's unusual combination of mystical belief and scientific brilliance is made believable.

Some of the unpleasant realities of early Chinatown's secret societies, prostitution, and opium dens are depicted, a bit luridly perhaps, but this is offset by warm characterizations of Moonshadow's family and friends. They are not stereotypes and they relate to one another in ways that are culturally distinct from white behaviors.

Windrider and his son meet a white woman and her niece who befriend them and respect their dreams. They are atypical whites and are strongly drawn feminist characters as well. The relationship with the women is important to the father and son, but it is not essential to them in the paternalistically racist way that is common in so many children's books.

The book, though highly recommended, does have a weakness. While oppression and racism are well described, blame is not placed squarely on the economic system which then, as now, exploited non-white labor for maximum profit.

## Fire Dragon

by Barbara Benezra, illustrated by Franc and Constance Roggeri.
Abelard-Schuman, 1970,
$4.95, 223 pages, grades 7-up

This book deals with the prejudice and racism which followed San Francisco's great earthquake and fire in 1906. Separated from his family after the disaster, a white boy named Sam Watkins finds temporary refuge with a Chinese American family. While searching for his relatives, he learns about Chinese Americans and their exclusion from American society.

The author's discussion of Sam's prejudice is straight-forward and clears up many popular misconceptions about Chinese and Chinese American culture. However, the book does not entirely succeed despite Ms. Benezra's good intentions. Although she debunks some myths, she reinforces others through oversimplifications and is often patronizing.

The Lee family becomes indebted to Sam when he helps save Charlie's baby sister. Later, when a dock the boys are standing on catches fire, Sam's quick thinking saves them both while Charlie, unable to swim, is paralyzed with fear. Again, it is Sam who squeezes through the small hole of a rickety house to save a parrot while Charlie, who is the smaller of the two, stands idly by.

Throughout the story, Sam is the shaper and mover. He is the one who challenges the soldiers who evict the Lees from their home because it is thought to be too valuable for the "Celestials." Similarly, a Mrs. Fiorelli advocates Mrs. Lee's right to remain in the same emergency camp area as the whites. Later, when Mrs. Fiorelli moves elsewhere, Mrs. Lee loses her protection and is moved out.

In contrast, Charlie and the other Chinese silently internalize their anger and move stoically wherever they are directed. Only after the numbers of Chinese have dwindled do they send a delegation to the mayor. In this scene as elsewhere in the story, the stereotype of Chinese as incredibly patient, industrious and polite is reinforced. The delegation is also depicted as mistakenly believing that their fortitude has forced the mayor's hand; whereas Sam overhears the town fathers discussing the real reasons for their capitulation—"votes, tax money and tourist attraction."

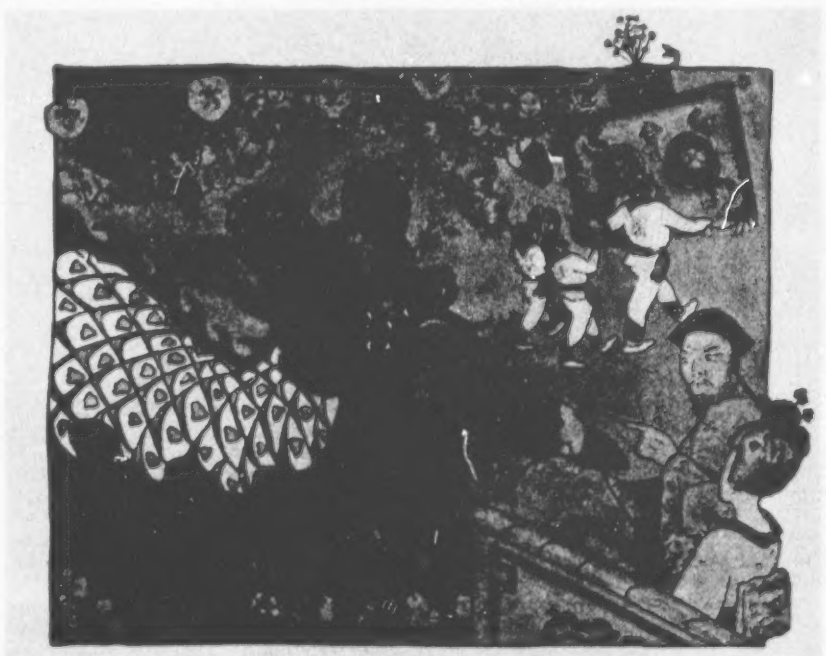
One wonders if Sam would have befriended Charlie had the latter been less "Americanized." For example, Sam thinks that Charlie speaks English "so much better than any of the other Chinese kids I've known." Sam frequently observes that regardless of his contact with the Lees, other Chinese "looked as [foreign and] ridiculous to him as ever." In fact, Sam does not think of Charlie as Chinese anymore. Does Charlie need to be "superior" to other Chinese before Sam can accept him? (This element is reminiscent of Theodore Taylor's *The Cay* in which the white boy's "positive" experiences with the Black sailor, Timothy, prompt him to ask "Are you [Timothy] still black?")

Also regrettable are many grossly outdated references which could mislead young readers; for example: "My father says in China the average man isn't respected either." Some amplification would also have been useful in the references to Chinese American women during the period as accepting male domination "without a murmur," and to the fact that women could be bought and sold. Without awareness of changes that have taken place, there is a danger that young readers may regard past conditions of Chinese Americans as present ones.

## The Green Ginger Jar

by Clara Ingram Judson,
illustrated by Paul Brown.
Houghton Mifflin, 1949,
$4.95, grades 4-6

Billed as "A Chinatown Mystery" set in Chicago during the 1930's, *The Green Ginger Jar* features a family in which males dominate while females (including a despicable grandmother) play traditional roles. In depicting the only daughter's rejection of her heritage and physical appearance ("I hate all our Chinese ways," she says) and her envy of a blonde white girl, the author compares the two physical-



*Over-emphasis on Chinese New Year celebrations-with-accessories, as in* The Cable Car and the Dragon, *is characteristic. Note the Japanese attire of the female spectators and the outdated Fu-Manchu look (complete with long fingernail) of their companion.*

Johnny Hong of Chinatown *not only stereotypes Asian Americans but Chicanos as well. Supposedly urbanites, they inexplicably wear sombreros, serapes and flamenco costumes.*

ly and mentally in a way which demeans the minority child. (A note about historical accuracy: There were few women in early Chinatowns or during the 1930's period. The Chinese American community was largely a bachelor society.)

Elder members of this immigrant family reject Americanization of any kind. As staunch and arrogant supporters of the Chinese value system who regard Chinatown as the sole arena of life, they are classic prototypes of the "Chinese keep to themselves" syndrome. The author also uses the term "Westerner" to identify those who are not Chinese Americans.

In the midst of such stereotyping, the reader could not care less about the mystery aspect of the book's unrealistic plot. Grandmother has hidden an expensive ruby in the bottom of the ginger jar, the discovery of which solves the problem of financing the grandson's medical education. How many immigrant families of any group are blessed with such easy solutions to this all-too-real dilemma? As used here, the mystery and its solution are contrivances for disguising heavy propaganda (the novel even ends with words from the national anthem: "The land of the free and the home of the brave").

Of special note is the book's Introduction, which is full of paternalistic and horrendous inaccuracies and distortions.

It is important that librarians and teachers alert children to the hidden messages in this book *before* it is read.

### Johnny Hong of Chinatown

by Clyde Robert Bulla,
illustrated by Dong Kingman.
T.Y. Crowell, 1952,
$3.50, 69 pages, grades 2-5

Seven-year-old Johnny Hong is anxiously awaiting his eighth birthday so he can have a birthday party like his older brothers. The story focuses on his search for new friends (he knows few children his own age) in time for the party.

Stereotypes about the Chinese abound: children are unquestioningly obedient; charlatan-like grandfathers dispense mysterious herbs, etc. Johnny is alternately subhuman and superhuman: He is exceedingly humble and servile on the one hand, and has infinite patience and can tolerate much pain or discomfort on the other.

Many aspects of Chinese culture are vulgarized. For example, the houses in Johnny's neighborhood recall the architecture of dynastic China. It is also implied that all Chinese are masters of the art of kite-flying, and that elderly Chinese always wear outdated attire (few Chinese wear traditional dress in the U.S.).

In an effort to integrate the story, the author has included stereotyped Chicanos. They are depicted—in an urban setting, believe it or not—with large mustaches, wide-brimmed sombreros and blankets.

*Johnny Hong of Chinatown* has few good points and violates the cultural integrity of two racial groups—Asian Americans and Chicanos.

### The Moon Guitar

by Marie Niemeyer,
illustrated by Gustave Nebel.
Franklin Watts, 1969,
$3.50, 151 pages, grades 4-6

This is a fast-moving mystery about a lost family heirloom and the ancient treasure it contains. In the course of heroine Su-Lin's adventurous search for the heirloom with her new American friend, Tracy, Su-Lin is faced with a conflict between her traditional Chinese upbringing and the American Way. New ideas ultimately prevail over old when Su-Lin's father agrees that she has earned the right to decide her own future.

Oppressive forms of family and social control such as "saving face," and touristy tidbits like Chinese food and holidays are passed off by the author as the essence of Chinese culture. She also demeans the Chinese concept of thinking of others before self (the foundation of collective living), and supports the American concept of rugged individualism.

Everything identified with Chinese culture in this book is either unattractive, mysterious, foreign or oppressive, making Su-Lin's declaration, "I want to be American," inevitable. Mr. Wu emerges as a mysterious, villainous man, who is moon-faced and sly-eyed. White beauty as the only valid beauty is reinforced when Su-Lin admires Tracy's blond hair and blue eyes as "just the combination" she would like to have. Subtly, the author projects white superiority by having a white girl initiate the adventure which leads to Su-Lin's independence, and a white man frightens Mr. Wu away.

### San Francisco Boy

written and illustrated by Lois Lenski.
Lippincott, 1955,
$4.29, 176 pages, grades 4-6

From the book's Foreword we learn that the author had visited San Francisco's Chinatown as the guest of a class of Chinese school-children, who wanted her to write a book showing "Chinatown from the point of view of the children who make their homes there." Up to a point, Ms. Lenski has fulfilled that objective. Readers are spared the usual rounds of exotica. Instead, people are depicted in their daily surroundings—working, shopping, socializing. The portrayals of family and social relationships are believable and real. However, her view of the community, though accurate, is narrow. She never questions why most Chinese work only in tourist, service-oriented, or unskilled jobs such as in restaurants, noodle factories, laundries, sewing factories, etc., and thus she glosses over the prevalence of discrimination.

Never citing the struggle of Felix' parents to survive, Ms. Lenski actually promotes the business establishment's point of view through Aunty Rose's rationalization that piecework is a better system than hourly wages—an anti-union, anti-worker attitude if there ever was one.

Father Fong's explanation to Felix that outside of Chinatown "you represent your race . . . always be polite and courteous" may be an accurate depiction of Chinese self-consciousness during the 1950's when McCarthyism and Korean War hysteria produced fears of deportation in the Chinese. But today, the father's statement comes off as racist stereotyping.

Confucian ethics—filial piety, respect for elders, obedience, passivity, being content with one's lot, etc.—dominate the author's description of Chinese heritage. That these same traditional values were used in China to oppress women and repress needed change is not mentioned. Indeed, Grandma Yee's comment that "China is in the hands of the enemy" reflects the author's uncritical acceptance of the Nationalist viewpoint.

Mei Gwen's goal in life is limited to being a good babysitter and housewife. She is a "typical" girl—squeamish about caterpillars and chickens, afraid of adventure and danger, petty and competitive. The other women in the story are seamstresses or housewives, with the exception of an eccentric little old lady whose portrayal is somewhat ageist.

Ms. Lenski's portrayal of boys is stronger than that of girls in that Felix is secure in his Chinese identity, while Mei Gwen has been seduced by American standards of beauty and behavior. The author's bias in favor of males is reflected in the book's title, which is inappropriate since the story is about both Felix and Mei Gwen.

The book should be read, if at all, strictly as a period piece and as an example of how children's books perpetuate bias.

### Willy Wong: American

by Vanya Oakes,
illustrated by Weda Yap.
Archway (Pocket Books), 1967,
$1.75, 153 pages, grades 4-5

Young Willy Wong is not happy about his "Chinese ways" and wants to prove himself (as the book jacket proudly claims) to be "100 per cent American." With this perspective, the author predictably stereotypes Willy's family, depicting them in ways that are hardly accurate for a family that has been in the U.S. for two or three generations. Elder members of the family (particularly the grandfather) exercise an unrealistically strong influence, and there is the usual emphasis on exotic foods, dragons, lanterns, and the New Year celebration and, of course, the family runs a "curio shop."

Wiliy's need to excel on the majority culture's terms rather than be accepted for himself becomes especially regrettable towards the end of the story. "As the winner went down the aisle and up on the stage, a wave of disappointment surged through Willy. . . . What use was he anyway? He was not good at baseball, not too good at his lessons. . . . not even good enough with his hands to win a prize." How unfortunate that children in the U.S. must constantly be pitted against each other, that school activities cannot be more collaborative, and that Willy's project cannot be judged on its own merits.

Equally regrettable is the book's sexism. Unlike Willy, his younger sister, Jasmine, is for some time referred to only as "younger sister." Chinese children in the U.S. may be referred to by their sibling order (i.e., first older brother, fourth older sister, etc.), but at birth it is common to give children both a Chinese and an American name. Behaviors are sexually defined—"You're a girl, you can't go," "Girls! Always crying"—and Jasmine is described as "looking like a Chinese doll." She also attends special Chinese classes which teach "the sword dance for boys, the fan dance and tea tray dance for girls." This reviewer attended Chinese school as a child and never learned a "tea tray dance," nor do I know of any Chinese girl who did. In the end, Jasmine selflessly abandons her own project for the contest and works all night with Willy to complete *his* project.

The book does provide a brief historical account of early Chinese railroad builders but rather than depicting the courage and strength of these men, the author portrays them as "burrowing like gophers" and "like so many ants."

### Wingman

written and illustrated by
Manus Pinkwater.
Dodd, Mead, 1975,
$5.50, 64 pages, grades 2-6

This well-written book poignantly depicts the embarrassment often felt not only by immigrant children, but by all children who are placed in an insensitive environment. Asian American children living in white neighborhoods can especially identify with Wing, a young Chinese American boy who withdraws into a comic book fantasy world.

Wing's salvation comes, ultimately, not from his fantasized Asian super-hero, Wingman, but from his own talents and from the aid of a sympathetic teacher. Predictably, the teacher is white, and in this respect, *Wingman* follows the pattern of endless children's books about minority children who are rescued through white benevolence. However, this particular teacher is depicted as an exception among *several* teachers who are described as either racist or incredibly insensitive, unfeeling adults.

The influence of Wing's father is also critical to the boy's emotional growth. He is a laundryman and to that extent he is stereotypical. But this is counteracted by his portrayal as a warm, well-developed character. The father-son relationship is a definite plus in the story, as is a wonderful passage on the significant effects that viewing great paintings can have on young people who are budding artists.

Wing finally adjusts to his school surroundings, mainly because he is an unusually talented child. (He is the best reader in his class and the best artist of his age group in all of New York City!) Since the author fails to suggest any clue as to how less gifted children can deal with racist institutions or dire poverty, the burden of survival and success is (once again) placed on the victim, and society remains uncharged with the responsibility for giving all youngsters an even chance.

Although the author-illustrator's attempt to render a comic book style is not as successful as his story line, this book is better than most available books about Asian Americans.

One problem with the book is that its depiction of China is dated and will reinforce stereotypes about pagoda roofs, Fu Manchu mustaches and old, traditional style garb.

### Yellow Silk for May Lee

by Shirlee Petkin Newman,
illustrated by Leslie Goldstein.
Bobbs Merrill, 1961,
$3.25, 128 pages, grades 2-6

A decade lies between the first publication of *Willy Wong* and this work, yet the similarities between the two books are striking. Each one deals with a young person and his/her family in San Francisco's Chinatown, and each depicts a troublesome grandparent. While Willy Wong is plagued by an old-fashioned and oppressive grandfather, May Lee must contend with a dogmatic grandmother. Both books emphasize Chinese traditions and superstitions, and contrast the "exoticism" and "quaintness" of Chinese culture with

*The stereotype of Asian Americans as exotic gift shop proprietors is projected in* Willy Wong: American*—and note the spectacled, squinty-eyed men.*

"American ways" (May Lee's grandmother says such things as "What says this, granddaughter?").

In particular, *Yellow Silk for May Lee* perpetuates outdated and regressive ideas regarding women. As with most stories about first generation Chinese American girls, May Lee suffers the fate of being female in a Confucian-oriented family. Girls cannot be in the dragon parade at Chinese New Year because, explains May Lee's father, "In China, girls never carry the New Year Dragon, May Lee." "You will dress up in your Chinese costume and watch, as girls always do," says mother. Nor can girls participate in the kite-flying contest held during the Spring festival—"That is boys' fun," says Father. Later he tells May Lee that "little girls' heads are filled with thoughts of pretty dresses." In contrast, her cousin, Soo-Pung, enjoys considerable freedom and is lavished with praise and attention by his grandmother.

May Lee's aspirations are consistent with her status as a victim of sexual chauvinism. The novel revolves around her yearning and striving for a long yellow silk dress with "slits up the sides" to wear for Chinese New Year. The dress will presumably replace the pajama-style outfit she wears under a plaid dress in an illustration on the book jacket. (This absurd three-layer effect is apparently the illustrator's idea of an Asian American "look." In addition, the author's frequent descriptions of traditional Chinese outfits as "costumes" tend to unnecessarily exoti-

*This ridiculous outfit above is apparently the illustrator's idea of typical Chinese American attire.*

cize functional dress. The long, black robes worn by Mr. Tong are generally worn by scholars and, in any case, are seldom worn since they tend to restrict movement.)

An exchange between May Lee's parents at the beginning of the story reflects the author's ignorance about critical aspects of Chinese American history. Joyfully anticipating the long-awaited arrival of grandmother from Hong Kong, Mrs. Chan says proudly to her husband, "It's only because you're an American citizen that we don't have to wait even longer." In fact, it is because they are *Chinese* that the Chans have had to wait so long, for it was not until 1965 (when the National Origins Act was passed) that the Asian immigration quota was raised to be on a par with the European.

## Histories and Biographies

### Chinatown Sunday: The Story of Lillian Der

by Carol Ann Bales,
illustrated with photographs.
Reilly & Lee, 1973,
$5.95, unpaged, grades 3-7

The daily life of ten-year-old Lillian Der in a middle-class Chicago suburb is presented here through photographs and taped interviews with Lillian and her family. Lillian's life is a "combination plate"—traditional Chinese food and customs intertwined with newly acquired Americanisms. With her superficial understanding of traditional customs and unquestioning acceptance of her elders' Confucian explanations, Lillian is a prototypical middle-class Chinese American who lives outside of Chinatown. We are given the picture of a well-adjusted, obedient, studious and happy girl with strong family and cultural ties, who resembles—too closely for comfort—the stereotype of the model minority.

In an introduction that is accurate overall, the author misrepresents an economic circumstance by stating that the "Chinese opened up more and more laundries and restaurants so that they did not have to compete with white workers." In reality, the Chinese opened laundries and restaurants, not because they did not *want* to compete with white workers in other occupations, but because they *were not allowed* to compete.

As an introduction to some aspects of middle-class Chinese American life, this book has a certain usefulness; however, it is important that Lillian Der not be viewed as representing people who live in Chinatowns and/or newly arrived Chinese immigrants. Rather *Chinatown Sunday* should be used along with other books, to provide a broad perspective on Chinese Americans. Under mature supervision, the issues of biculturalism, identity and conflicting value systems could be explored to advantage with this book.

### The Chinese Helped Build America

by Dorothy Dowdell and Joseph Dowdell.
Julian Messner, 1972,
$4.95, grades 3-6

This history has faults very similar to Betty Lee Sung's *The Chinese in America* and the Chus' *Passage to the Golden Gate*. Inappropriately mild language is used in discussing the systematic oppression of Chinese, first in China during the mid-1800's, and later in the U.S. (i.e., imperialism is never identified as such, racism is euphemistically called prejudice, etc.). Nowhere is there any mention of Chinese resistance to oppression. Rather the image that emerges is of meek uncomplaining victims.

The book is full of dubious assertions: "Fair housing laws make it possible for Chinese Americans to live where they please" or "Today the Chinese American is a highly respected person who can enter any business or profession for which he is qualified." One need only check with the U.S. Civil Rights Commission to refute the latter lie. Moreover, the existence of Chinatowns attests to the fact that the Chinese still cannot live where they please, and the authors fail to discuss why fair housing laws are necessary.

The only example used to support the statement that "The role of today's Chinese women is changing" is a 1971 anti-busing protest mounted by women in San Francisco's Chinatown. (Recent investigations have revealed involvement by the John Birch Society as an instigator of that protest.) What about the women who have demonstrated against low wages in Chinatown sweatshops or against the Vietnam War?

There is the usual chapter on "achieving" Chinese Americans with its array of token businessmen, government employees, scientists and artists. The American economy, we are told, "is further benefited by businessmen of Chinese ancestry who export and import goods to and from Hong Kong and Formosa." And there is the expected chapter on "exotic" festivals, holidays, foods, customs, superstitions, etc.

The book leans heavily on the image of Chinese as "quiet," "hard-working," law-abiding people "with almost no record of juvenile delinquency or adult crime" and who "over and over . . . proved what excellent citizens they were." The book concludes: "The Chinese Americans are a small minority. . . . Nevertheless, their *ancient* [emphasis added] traditions and culture have enriched American life far out of proportion to their numbers." First, the very fact that the Chinese needed to prove their "excellence" speaks to the existence of paternalism and racism. Secondly, the citing of *ancient* Chinese traditions as the source of cultural enrichment effectively excludes Chinese Americans. Furthermore, the enriching elements tend to be those which suit the tastes of the larger culture, e.g., "Gradually, other Americans realized what an asset the Chinese were to the communities in which they lived. Colorful Chinatowns in San Francisco and New York are important tourist attractions. Chinese restaurants in almost every city are popular eating places with many Americans."

The authors insinuate that regardless of the fact that Chinese Americans have been prime targets of racial discrimination, it is to their credit that they were able to become "excellent" Americans (other minorities, take note). Unsophisticated readers cannot help but conclude from *The Chinese Helped Build America* that all is milk and honey for the Chinese minority in the U.S.

### The Chinese in America

by Claire Jones.
Lerner Publications, 1972,
$3.95, 96 pages, grades 5-11

The positive aspect of this book is that it documents and condemns blatant racist acts committed against the Chinese who came to the U.S. Lynchings, beatings, and the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Immigration Act of 1924 (which prevented Chinese wives from joining their husbands here) are exposed, as well as the role of culture in promoting this racism (stereotypes of the Chinese in Hollywood movies, for example).

However, a submissive image of the Chinese is painted as a people who never fought back against these injustices—the so-called "Crocker's Pets" and "China dolls." It fails to point out that the Chinese

were super-exploited in their jobs on the farms and building the railroads. It promotes the myth that the primary reason the Chinese came here was to search for gold, whereas actually they were actively recruited by U.S. entrepreneurs.

The analysis of Chinese history and life in the U.S. is superficial and of the "great men make history" variety, with a neat wrap up in the last chapter of Chinese Americans who have "made it." The text consistently fails to show the oppressive nature of class society both in ancient China and present-day U.S. It deletes the role of Chinese peasants from history and, likewise, that of Chinese women.

As for Chinatowns today, the opinion expressed is that although they "strongly suggest" the ghetto, people are sentimentally attached to them. It does not attribute segregation to racist practices. "Living conditions [in Chinatown] are improving," states the author. (Tell that to the women who are working up to 12-hour days, six days a week for 75 cents an hour in the Chinatown sweatshops, and who have been at it for 25 years. Injunctions brought in the last few years by the U.S. Department of Labor against Chinatown shops confirm these distressing conditions.)

### The Chinese in America

by Betty Lee Sung.
Macmillan, 1972,
$4.95, grades 4-7

This is an adaptation for children of the author's *Mountain of Gold*, published as an adult book in 1967. The original book's assimilationist message made it the most popular book on Chinese American history in the U.S.

In the new work, Ms. Sung continues to present history in a vacuum. She completely ignores the oppression resulting from Western imperialism in 19th century China, and for the spectacle of Western imperialists threatening China, she uses an extraordinary euphemism: "The Western nations came knocking at her door." She also perpetuates myths—"The dream of fortunes in gold lured the Chinese across 7,000 miles of ocean to a foreign land"—and neglects to draw upon recent historical research documenting early resistance to oppression.

She uses white racist imagery, depicting Chinese workers "swarming over" the canyons of the Sierra Nevadas, and she defines Native American land as "hostile Indian territory."

Ms. Sung presents the 20th century Chinese American community as blending happily in the "melting pot." She makes absolutely no mention of the fact that institutional practices and societal attitudes still effectively deny Chinese full participation in U.S. society (witness the continued existence of Chinatown ghettos), stating that the barriers of prejudice were let down after World War II: "when they proved that they could do their jobs and do them well, the barriers of prejudice began to topple" and "Incidents of discrimination are isolated. With the major barriers removed, the Chinese have done well economically and socially." Nor does she say anything about the exploitation of Chinese immigrant women by the clothing industry. If the Chinese were as assimilated as Ms. Sung would have us believe, why was the Lau vs. Nichols suit necessary?

The book's photographs are inadequately or misleadingly captioned and seriously outdated. Young readers will surely think that Chinatown teenagers still wear Mary Jane shoes and continental pants. Ms. Sung continues to rely on phrases like, "the Chinese are particularly suited by temperament and tradition" and the ever popular "it is their nature" (such phrases were favored by 19th century social Darwinists and other racists).

*The Chinese in America* is an insult to the Chinese American community. The author needs consciousness raising.

### Fifth Chinese Daughter

by Jade Snow Wong,
illustrated by Kathryn Uhl.
Harper & Row, 1950,
$4.79, 246 pages, grades 9-up

For author Jade Snow Wong, growing up Chinese in the U.S. of the 1930's and '40's was fraught with economic hardship and internal bicultural conflict. Her experiences were also marked by her struggle for recognition as a female and as an individual in her Confucian-oriented family. Jade Snow finally earned her parents' approval by graduating from college (not an easy feat for an Asian woman in those days), by winning a well-publicized contest promoting the war effort and by establishing her own successful ceramics business in San Francisco's Chinatown.

Jade Snow's portrayal of a non-emotional, unyielding, traditional Chinese American family, although hard to believe and/or accept, authentically reflects many first generation homes in which the parents were Chinese and the children American-born. This reviewer could easily relate to Jade Snow's youthful rejection of her upbringing and her embrace of American ways. However, as the criteria introducing these reviews noted, there is a fine line between authenticity and stereotyping. As one of the earliest books about a Chinese American family written by a Chinese American, this book became the model for others and may mislead readers to believe that *all* Chinese American families behave similarly.

Ms. Wong's objective was to make the constructive and delightful aspects of Chinese culture intelligible to non-Chinese—hence, her extended explanations of traditions, superstitions, ceremonies, Chinese cuisine, dining rituals, etc.

A kind of "insider's guide" to Chinatown for tourists, *Fifth Chinese Daughter* presents the safe and acceptable aspects of the author's life that are compatible with America's sensitivity regarding its treatment of minorities. What emerges is a model family—hardworking, persevering, grateful, ambitious. No mention is made of the violence and racial discrimination encountered by the Chinese since their arrival here in the mid-1850's.

In the absence of an historical perspective, Jade Snow's passive response to her two personal encounters with racism (in elementary school and while job hunting) reveals her incredible ignorance and unwillingness to call racism by its name. Her rationalizations that Chinese have a superior culture fail to justify her passivity, but only serve to reinforce the passive Asian stereotype while simultaneously insinuating that other minorities might do well to imitate this "model" behavior. (The book's publication in 1950 made it a timely piece of anti-Japanese propaganda.) More importantly, Jade Snow's behavior fails to provide a strong example for other young people faced with similar predicaments.

The immense popularity of *Fifth Chinese Daughter* as the definitive book on Chinese Americans symbolizes the author's sacrifice of her cultural identity in exchange for acceptance into the American mainstream. Her book should be read as a discussion stimulator to enlighten young people about minority attitudes that were more common to past generations than to our own time.

This was not a children's book when it appeared 25 years ago. Yet it is widely used in high schools, appears on many young adult booklists and is now regularly

*The photograph above, of a classic "China Doll," is both stereotypical and inappropriate to the book's subject.*

listed in *Children's Books in Print*. It has been published in eight languages, has been widely praised and, from a monetary point of view, is considered the most successful book ever written by a Chinese American. How unfortunate that the message it promotes is such a distortion of reality. (The book is currently being adapted for a TV documentary; see "Media Monitor," page 37.)

### Hawaii's People from China

by Margaret Young.
Hogarth Press, 1974,
$2.50, 48 pages, grades 4-up

A volume in the "Hawaii's Cultural Heritage" series, this book is full of plugs for Oceania Floating Restaurant, Aloha Airlines and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, among other enterprises. Purporting to be a history of the Chinese in Hawaii, it is actually a cover-up for exploitation and racism highlighted with a few "success" stories of Hawaiian businessmen, school principals and legislators.

A parade of inaccuracies and distortions (despite the 1974 publication date) paint a picture of early Chinese laborers as having been lucky to come to the U.S. regardless of their inhospitable reception. Indeed, economic hardship and discrimination (of an isolated rather than institutional nature) are viewed as things of the past. Now, if "any kind of people want to live, love, work, grow and prosper in a beautiful land, Hawaii is one good place to do it."

In any case, the book implies that "past" racism can be overcome through hard work, money and education. "The sons and grandsons of the men who came to Hawaii to work in the fields and stayed did 'very well' for themselves. What that means is they made money and could buy many things. Even they could now join the same 'nice' clubs that the rich join. When the Chinese didn't have money they weren't allowed to join the 'nice' clubs because the 'nice' people didn't like the way they looked. You see they looked Chinese."

The undated historical photographs convey misleading images of modern day Chinese Americans, and the glossy color photo on the book's cover—showing a smiling beauty in tiara and *cheongsam*—is a publicity gimmick that is inappropriate for the text. An "Inquiry Picture" section features photos of those who have "made it" in Hawaii. Apparently, the laborers who were the backbone of the Hawaiian economy, and of whom the book speaks at length, do not qualify for this section.

Hogarth Press, located in Hawaii, has a companion book, *Hawaii's People from Japan*, due for publication this year.

### Passage to the Golden Gate: A History of the Chinese in America to 1910

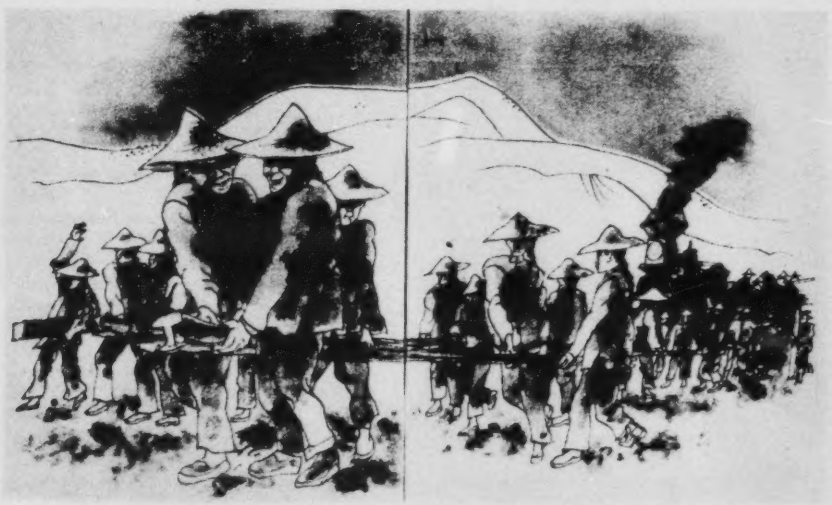
by Samuel and Daniel Chu,
illustrated by Earl Thollander.
Doubleday (Zenith Books), 1967,
$1.45, grades 7-up

The authors' discussion of modern China begins with the arrival of the first U.S. ship on the "China scene" in search of new markets, natural resources and "cheap" (exploitable) labor. China and Chinese people are measured in terms of their potential for exploitation by "enterprising" entrepreneurs from the U.S.

The authors then tell why Chinese *chose* to come to the U.S. (if escaping famine and starvation in South China qualifies as choice). This reviewer is disturbed by the authors' lack of outrage over the injustices their people have suffered (both authors are Chinese American). How could they describe so placidly the murder of 28 Chinese miners by a white mob at Rock Springs, Montana, in 1885? Why have they refused to call the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 a piece of racist legislation? Why do they omit acts of protest and resistance by the Chinese against exploitation and harassment?

A lengthy description of the Chinese role in building the Western segment of the transcontinental railroad is an example of the authors' whitewashing of oppression. Although the laborers are grudgingly acknowledged as having built the railroad, it is to the U.S. financiers and entrepreneurs like Crocker, Strobridge and Judah that the authors pay homage. These men they glorify, and they depict the workers as uncomplaining human machines. The workers are forced to labor through the wretched mountain winter; yet it is the financiers who are praised—for *their* audacity, no less! Nowhere do the authors comment on the spirit and determination of Chinese American railroad builders—an omission shared by all historical analyses in this study.

Not only do the authors project an image of the Chinese as meek and submissive; they perpetuate the elitist illusion that education is the key to acceptance and equality. On several occasions, it is implied that although the majority of Chinese laborers suffered in this country, this was to be expected because they were uneducated!



*The description—and illustration—of Chinese American laborers as "Crocker's Pets" in* Passage to the Golden Gate *is dehumanizing and demeaning.*

### Plant Wizard: The Life of Lue Gim Gong

by Marian Murray,
illustrated by Eros Keith.
Crowell-Collier, 1970,
$3.95, 109 pages, grades 4-up

This is a patronizingly told story about a poor Chinese who came to the U.S. in the 1870's in search of an education, and who later became famous for his work in improving the quality of various fruit plants (he was particularly noted for his innovations in Florida's citrus industry). Marked by golden opportunity and the "American Dream" realized, Lue's life exemplifies the exception—and an extraordinary exception at that.

We learn, first, that Lue's uncle paid his way to the U.S. He was then "lucky" enough to get work in a New England town (unfortunately, as a scab). Lue was taught English by North Adams, Massachusetts, citizens who were seeking to convert "heathens" to Christianity. But Lue's biggest break came when he met Frances Burlingame ("Miss Fannie") who made it possible for him "to do things no other Chinese in this country had ever done."

In many ways, the story focuses more on Frances Burlingame than it does on the

"plant wizard." In a chapter entitled "Miss Fannie Takes Over," the turning point in Lue's life comes when he becomes this white woman's protege.

A melange of inaccuracies, omissions and distortions marks the author's treatment of Chinese history and culture. Consider this statement about the oppression of Chinese immigrants: "Ignorant people got hysterical sometimes and stoned them, or beat them, or even lynched them. Thoughtless people did all sorts of things that offended their dignity. The Chinese are proud people; but they are patient, and seldom complained, no matter what happened." Also, the author makes frequent comments on "the way it was" in old China (poverty, deprivation, illiteracy) in comparison to the U.S., yet fails to provide readers with information on contemporary China even though her book was written in 1970.

And consider this insult. After stating that the Chinese of Lue's time were clannish people who had no regard for "outsiders," Ms. Murray goes on to say that "the religious training Lue received in America stressed the importance of loving one's neighbor—in other words, strangers as well as family."

Certainly, Lue Gim Gong should be remembered for his work, but this biography should not be used without supplementary materials containing accurate accounts of Chinese American history.

### Rice Cakes and Paper Dragons

by Seymour Reit,
photographs by Paul Conklin.
Dodd, Mead, 1973,
$3.95, grades 2-5

This is the story of Marie Chan and her family in Chinatown, New York. Their lives and activities both at home and around the city are described through photographs.

In its emphasis on Chinese culture and traditions, the text suffers from overgeneralizations as well as from gross inaccuracies. For instance, "Some Chinese Americans are Buddhists, but most belong to the Christian faith" and "The people of Chinatown like their special world . . . ." Regarding Latin Americans, Marie learns that "the people of Brazil speak a language called Portuguese, and . . . everyone drinks strong coffee from little cups."

As with so many children's books about Chinese American families, the story revolves around preparation for a Chinese New Year celebration.

### Sherman: A Chinese American Child Tells His Story

by Joe Molnar.
Franklin Watts, 1973,
$4.95, unpaged, grades 4-7

In a departure from the standard Chinatown setting, this books tells the story of a ten-year-old boy who lives in the suburbs. Based on taped conversations between the author and the subject, the text has the matter-of-fact tone of a child's discourse.

A peculiar aspect of the story is the depiction of Sherman mainly in the company of other Chinese people. Since he lives in a suburban community where "There aren't many Chinese," interaction with non-Chinese must be an ever-present reality.

The book has many parallels with *Chinatown Sunday*, and photographs are used to illustrate Sherman, his family and their daily activities. And, as was a problem with the former book, this one reinforces the image of Asian Americans as model minority and problemless people (see *Chinatown Sunday* review for specifics).

# JAPANESE AMERICAN

## Picture Books

### The Birthday Visitor

by Yoshiko Uchida,
illustrated by Charles Robinson.
Charles Scribner's, 1975,
$5.95, grades p.s.-3

Yoshiko Uchida's heroines are model children who possess common sense, self-confidence, humor and modesty.

Emi, the Japanese American heroine of *The Birthday Visitor*, is such a child. She is unhappy because a Christian minister is coming from Japan to stay at her house on her birthday—which means that she cannot have a party with her friends. However, her parents plan a party in her honor with their guest and an old neighborhood couple. Of course, Emi is delighted and realizes that it is the best birthday she ever had (fortunately, the minister turns out to be a nice person). One wonders, however, why the parents did not plan a party with her friends on another day.

Orderliness and serenity permeate this book, and the conflict is calmly resolved. The story takes place in a never-never land of non-materialistic, middle-class comfort and stability which would seem rare in the U.S. today. Could one consider this otherworldliness, this peace and feeling of unity a typically Japanese characteristic? If so, is it possible within the American societal setting? Furthermore, although the traits themselves are positive, don't they perpetuate certain myths about cool, collected, unemotional "Orientals"? One can almost hear an adult, after reading this book to children, saying, "Aren't they a lovely family?"—which is practically the same as saying, "Asians in America have strong family units and don't have overwhelming problems."

Although the illustrations are attractive, a picture with the characters bowing to each other is not accurate. Women in Japan do not bow with their arms hanging straight at their sides.

### Dance, Dance, Amy-Chan!

written and illustrated
by Lucy Hawkinson. Whitman, 1964,
$3.95, grades p.s.-2

Two sisters take part in the *O-bon odori* (a festival in remembrance of deceased ancestors). Although the girls are supposed to be Japanese American, the story at one point describes them as "two Japanese girls swishing their long sleeves," and the cover illustration shows them dancing in Japanese-style attire. Their grandmother gives them a doll set for Girls' Day (the *Hine-Matsuri* festival still celebrated in Japan) a special day when "little girls over there are bringing out their dolls like these to show their friends."

The grandfather tells of his happy childhood dancing in the *O-bon* festival, yet on the following page we see an illustration of an *all-girl O-bon* dancing class. Amy's favorite dance was "about butterflies among the flowers." This is rather implausible since *O-bon* dance themes are more work-a-day and regional, focusing on the activities of fishermen, priests, miners, farmers, etc.

The relationship between the girls and their grandparents appears to be a warm and loving one. But the story is a superficial one, and it suffers from a wide range of stereotypes.

*Japanese American girls peer shyly over a fan in* Dance, Dance, Amy-Chan!

### Meet Miki Takino

by Helen Copeland,
illustrated by Kurt Werth.
Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1963,
$4.95, 28 pages, grades p.s.-3

In *Meet Miki Takino*, a first grader searches for some grandparents to invite to his class party, his own grandparents having died before he was born. He asks the candy-store lady and her husband and Mr. Kelly, who picks up the dresses Miki's mother sews. The night of the party, Miki wins recognition because he outdoes his classmates by having five adopted grandparents in attendance.

This is a patronizing, racist book which reinforces the stereotype of Japanese Americans as being foreign and different. Other stereotypes are the florist and seamstress occupations so often attributed to Japanese Americans. Of course, Miki desperately strives to be accepted and only gains that acceptance by being overly superior—having five grandparents when everybody else has only four. His response is predictable—a modest "oh" that is consistent with his shy, "Oriental" personality.

The racist illustrations (stereotyped depictions of Japanese Americans, as well as of other nationalities) add little to the story and only serve to reinforce images of Asians as irrevocably alien.

### Michiko or Mrs. Belmont's Brownstone on Brooklyn Heights

by Clay Lancaster.
Charles E. Tuttle, 1965,
$3.50, 59 pages, grades p.s.-4

The author of this book is a Brooklynite who is fascinated with "exotic" Japan. Michiko (referred to constantly as "a little Japanese girl") comes to live in Brooklyn Heights with her guardian, the stuffy Mrs. Belmont, and Marie, the friendly maid. Throughout the story, Michiko remains a foreign curiosity. Deplaning in kimono and geta ("Michiko's eyes were unusually long and narrow"), she is dressed, at story's end, in the same way as she serves tea to her American classmates in Brooklyn's Japanese Botanical Garden. Michiko notes, in conclusion, that "They were all grinning broadly, so broadly, in fact, that their cheeks were pressed into long, narrow slits, exactly like her own."

Other even more disturbing references reveal the author's stereotyped thinking about minority peoples. While Michiko's two best friends, both white, are cast as Pilgrims in the school play, "Michiko was going to have to be a wild Indian. . . . Michiko found an ally in a Negro boy named Jerry, who was as small for his age as she was for hers." Jerry, like Michiko, plays one of several "savage guests" at the Thanksgiving feast.

When Michiko trades her new rubbers for Jerry's old ones Mrs. Belmont automatically assumes that he stole them until Michiko corrects her. (This one racist element alone makes the book dangerous and highly unsuitable for children.) Later, when Mrs. Belmont gives Michiko a satchel for Christmas, "She [Michiko] stood up, and with the satchel in her hands, bowed again and again, repeating each time: 'Thank you, Mrs. Belmont.'"

Female stereotypes are also present: When confronted with a minor crisis, "Michiko hid her face and wanted to run away"; "Michiko was dreaming that it was Doll's Day in Japan. In her dream she was dressed in a pale lavender kimono and flitted from place to place admiring the many beautiful dolls." On Christmas morning Michiko finds "a celluloid doll" in her stocking.

### Mieko

written and illustrated by Leo Politi.
Golden Gate Junior Books, 1969,
$4.79, unpaged, grades p.s.-3

Another offensive Leo Politi book about minorities (in this one, females are also maligned). Father, mother and young daughter, Mieko, live in the hills of Los Angeles. In the course of the story, Mieko learns to be a "proper" Japanese girl, with author Politi revealing along the way his superficial knowledge and understanding of Japanese American culture and people.

Politi harps upon the qualities of beauty, grace and feminity (even Mieko's name, we are told, means "beautiful, graceful, girl"). Mieko wants to be chosen Queen of the Ondo Parade and, according to her mother, the criteria for becoming queen are "learning to do all things well. . . . To sew, to arrange flowers, to be a fine hostess at the tea ceremony, to dance gracefully—all this and much more besides." Mieko has a head start since her mother has educated her in these things earlier in the book.

*Modesty, humility and timidity are conveyed in this illustration from* Mieko *(and again, a squinty-eyed spectacled man).*

Japanese Americans are stereotyped as being fanatic tea servers, flower arrangers and—you guessed it—gardeners. Reality is stretched to the breaking point when we encounter the miniature Japanese-style garden the author has placed in the family's backyard. There is a little pond, waterfall and bridge, and a small teahouse—the whole scene, of course, reeking with serenity.

The illustrations are equally cloying in their promotion of the image that all Japanese Americans wear kimonos and zoris all day. (Even in Japan, kimonos are worn only on special occasions.)

Mieko's father, with his head constantly bowed, looks as if the illustrator used a World War II anti-Japanese cartoon as his model for the Japanese male image. Father owns a grocery store, and he "kept it so neat and so clean and was so polite to everyone that he made many customers and friends." Alas, another model Japanese.

### Momo's Kitten

by Mitsu and Taro Yashima,
illustrated by Taro Yashima.
Viking, 1961,
$3.50, grades p.s.-2

Momo finds a stray kitten and takes care of her until the kitten grows up to have a litter of her own. The drawings are typically Yashima, well done and lovely, but with a vague and unclear quality that is disconcerting. Because of the print and paper quality, some illustrations are very dark and difficult to interpret.

There is nothing in the story that would indicate that this family is Japanese American except for the names.

### Suki and the Invisible Peacock

by Joyce Blackburn,
illustrated by Stephanie Clayton.
Word Books, 1965,
$2.95, unpaged, grades p.s.-3

Suki's alienation from her older sisters forces her to create a best friend for herself in the form of an invisible peacock. Despite the sensitively rendered pen-and-ink illustrations, overdoses of the Christian religion and ethics as well as other flaws mar the text throughout.

Females are depicted in a sexist fashion. Suki's mother-in-apron is on permanent kitchen detail and is constantly picking up after Suki and her father (he is the only person who shows Suki any understanding and warmth). Her sisters are shrill nags, cliquish and insensitive to Suki's loneliness.

The treatment of encounters between Suki and a bully named Butch, who

repeatedly calls her "slant eyes," is most unsatisfactory. Instead of confronting, in some realistic way, the prejudice and meanness which underlie his name-calling, Suki rescues Butch after an old wall collapses on top of him. The two then become friends when Suki visits him in the hospital. Passively retreating into conversations with an imaginary being—the peacock—as a way of coping with Butch's behavior, Suki is told by her imaginary peacock that it's alright for Butch to laugh at her eyes because they are actually different. The peacock also suggests that since Suki, too, has faults, she should not condemn Butch but should turn the other cheek. In the end, Butch's troubled home life is cited to neatly justify his behavior.

The author's approach here neither encourages minority children to realistically deal with prejudice nor helps white children cope with their own hurtful behavior.

It is shocking that a great many individuals and organizations have—according to the quotes on the jacket—endorsed this book.

### Suki and the Magic Sand Dollar

by Joyce Blackburn,
illustrated by Stephanie Clayton.
Word Books, 1969,
$2.95, unpaged, grades p.s.-3

When the upper-middle-class Goshos leave their Chicago home to vacation on St. Simons Island off the coast of Georgia, Suki Gosho meets Cherry, a Black woman scientist, and her niece. Together they explore the island, observing and learning fascinating facts about horseshoe crabs, sea turtles and sand dollars.

Although author Blackburn has obviously attempted to portray the subjects in an unpatronizing manner, there are shades of stereotyping, particularly in the case of the Black characters. Cherry's teeth are described as "pearly and even" and Cherry says, "When things go wrong my people sing, it always helps." We are told that her great-grandfather (who had been a slave on the island) sang songs for the bad times as well as for the good.

Unlike the author's *Suki and the Invisible Peacock* (reviewed above), the Goshos' Japanese American identity is irrelevant to the story. They could just as well be white Americans.

### A Time for Flowers

by Mark Taylor,
illustrated by Graham Booth.
Golden Gate Junior Books, 1967,
$4.27, grades p.s.-3

This story of a brother and sister who attempt to sell flowers in order to raise money to help their grandfather is presented in a charming and colorful manner. Several disquieting messages emerge, however.

The book's most obvious flaw is sexist stereotyping. Females are generally limited to domestic or service activities, and timid Michi must constantly rely on her brother to think and formulate plans. (Surprisingly, this book appears in the 1976 *A Guide to Non-Sexist Children's Books* by J. Adell and H. D. Klein.)

It was unclear to this reviewer where the story takes place, since all of the characters, except a white security guard (an obvious symbol of white authority), are Asian. Only the author's reference, on the title page, to Southern California and the presence of the guard give any indication that the setting is not Japan. Once again, the racist stereotype that all Japanese Americans have green thumbs is perpetuated. Furthermore, the children's exemplary behavior evokes the image of Asian Americans as a problemless, model minority.

### Umbrella

written and illustrated
by Taro Yashima. Viking, 1958,
$3.50, 35 pages, grades p.s.-1

This is a sensitive, joyful story of a little girl who, in her excitement to use her new boots and umbrella, grows up a little and learns to walk alone for the first time. Colorful illustrations, done in a sophisticated and impressionistic style, will interest adults more than children.

It would have been helpful if the author had indicated that the raindrop sounds in the story are in Japanese and analogous to "pitter patter" in English.

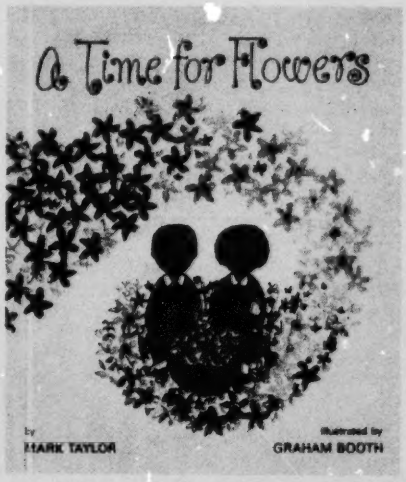
## Juvenile and Young Adult Fiction

### Jenny Kimura

by Betty Cavanna. Morrow, 1964,
$5.75, grades 7-up

This is a perfect textbook for versing teenagers in the attitudes towards class, race, sex and success held and promoted by the establishment. To her credit, the author has done her homework regarding Japanese culture and lifestyles, writes interestingly and tells a good tale.

Jenny is the sixteen-year-old daughter of an American father and Japanese mother on a first visit to the U.S. at the invitation of her grandmother, who has never forgiven her son for marrying a Japanese woman. Plunged into an upper-middle-class milieu in which men are bankers, professors and grain tycoons, while women care for the men, do volunteer work and go to country clubs, Jenny enthusiastically embraces the carefree ways and goals of American girls (boys, clothes, boys, sports, boys, boys, boys) and deals with the racism she encounters with quiet and calm. The only non-whites in this environment are a "black-skinned, plump, and kindly" maid and a woman who writes book reviews.




*In addition to the slant-eyed, look-alike appearance of its main characters, this book stereotypes Japanese Americans as gardeners.*

Racism is overcome at the end through individual, not group or societal, solutions. Jenny ends up believing in the "essential goodness of America" and is left to decide whether to go to Radcliffe or Wellesley, depending upon which boy she wants to be near—a dashing, "typical American" hero who is "tall and strong on his long straight legs," or a "strictly American," sensitive and strong Nisei boy who wants to become an architect. A clear value judgment is placed on the desirability of success, materialism, and other American ways of life.

This book is in its sixth printing!

### The Moved-Outers

by Florence Crannell Means.
Houghton Mifflin, 1945,
$5.95, 154 pages, grades 7-9

A moving but paternalistically sympathetic story of two interned families in which many commonly expressed feelings, conflicts and propaganda of the time are reflected. Occasionally, racist and sexist comments are made: "prim little Mother"; "Mrs. Ohara slanted a glance at them"; "I really get a thrill out of learning how to manage those blessed little monkeys." And Mrs. Ohara uses stiff, unnatural language—"Have you had a pleasant day?" or "Don't be uncouth."

A strong message is delivered to minority citizens: Become good, hard-working, patriotic Americans to show that you are worthy of being treated as human beings. Thus, the Ohara family is the socially acceptable one because of their greater material wealth, command of English, Christian religion and white friends, while the Ito family is Buddhist, poor and speaks

in pidgin. Things end "happily" when the Itos pay their debts, and their son converts to Christianity and joins the war effort.

### Myeko's Gift

by Kay Haugaard,
illustrated by Dora Ternei.
Abelard-Schuman, 1966,
$3.95, 160 pages, grades 3-7

Ms. Haugaard tries to show the problems and traumas a Japanese girl named Myeko experiences in an American school but succeeds only in perpetuating the pattern of a minority child who must constantly "prove" herself in order to gain the friendship of insensitive, indifferent and sometimes cruel children.

Myeko is a stereotype of the small, dainty, graceful, shy, overly polite girl from an alien culture which she must frequently explain to others. (This "culture" consists of a smattering of Japanese foods, games, holidays and attire; all illustrations of her parents portray them in Japanese dress, and the book cover shows Myeko displaying her colorful kimono to her schoolmates). But though humble and modest to the point of self-deprecation, she appears to be a very good student, good enough to be called "teacher's pet."

The "ideal all-American" is personified in the character of Carol. Carol is blond, beautiful, understanding, friendly, adventurous, multi-talented and the first to befriend Myeko (she even saves Myeko's life when a boat they are in overturns). Unbelievably, Carol can do no wrong, excelling in almost everything she does, and she is the person whom Myeko tries hardest to emulate. At story's end, Myeko realizes that her "gift" is her "difference" from the other children. But her self-discovery is unbelievable since, throughout the book, she has struggled to be accepted as an American like Carol.

Usually cooking or cleaning, Myeko's mother is unable to help her daughter with a school paper about Japanese old-style painting because, she says (as she "looked up from her mending"), "I do not know about paintings. Why do you not write a paper on cooking sukiyaki?" Father knows about painting and helps Myeko finish her project. (As a gardener, Myeko's father reinforces a stereotype in the absence of other Japanese American occupations in the story.)

Although out of print, this book is in many libraries. It should be used only to provide a limited perspective on how insensitivity toward a minority child can hurt.

### Mystery in Little Tokyo

by Frank Bonham,
illustrated by Kazue Misumura.
E.P. Dutton, 1966, $3.95, grades 3-6

The shallow plot of *Mystery in Little Tokyo* traces the disappearance and recovery of a trunkful of old samurai swords by Danny and Carol Nomura, who are staying with their grandparents in Los Angeles' "Little Tokyo" community.

Visions of inscrutable, strange and mysterious "Orientals" haunt the story, taking such forms as the unscrupulous, "shifty eyed" Mr. Kaji who fraudulently claims to own "a string of travel agencies in Japan" and to be a representative of the Japanese government. In one scene, Mr. Kaji threatens to kill himself rather than lose face, in keeping with the romanticized stereotype of Japanese as super-proud people.

Central to the plot is a foolish and longstanding feud between the dogmatic and spiteful Grandpa Nomura and his neighbor, the "stubborn" Mr. Shinoda, over a prized samurai sword which they both covet. Both characters are merchants (Grandpa owns an "exotic" gift shop) and Danny's father owns a wholesale flower shop. An offensively negative image of the Japanese American community as a tourist trap for shoppers is presented through the character of a Japanese American policeman, one of whose main jobs is to keep order in "Little Tokyo" so that the merchants won't "be ruined" by people who "would be afraid to shop here."

Grandma Nomura is a clucking, apologetic woman who cooks her way through the story (in one scene she is criticized for not getting the breakfast waffles to the table fast enough). And although Carol (who, we are told, looks like "Madame Butterfly") takes initiative, Danny is the leader and mastermind who solves the mystery of the missing swords.

Despite some effort on the author's part to examine life in a Japanese American community, the book remains essentially a superficial and exploitative venture.

### The Promised Year

by Yoshiko Uchida, illustrated
by William M. Hutchinson.
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959,
$5.95, 192 pages, grades 4-6

Ten-year-old Keiko arrives from Japan to live for a year with her Aunt Emi and Uncle Henry in California. Her reception by relatives at the airport marks the beginning of Keiko's somewhat uncomfortable relationship with Uncle Henry over her newly acquired pet cat. Later, at her relatives' apartment, Keiko is welcomed by their Japanese American friends, at which point one wonders why no one has thought to introduce Keiko to other children her age.

When the cat disappears, Keiko privately believes her Uncle Henry has turned it loose. But, lo and behold, a friend appears to help her with her troubles—a white boy, Mike Michaelson, whose mother works in Uncle Henry's flower shop (Keiko's mother also runs a flower shop in Japan—an occupational stereotype). And who should come to Uncle Henry's aid when Aunt Emi is hospitalized, but Mrs. Michaelson? With the exception of Keiko's friend, Aunt Kobe, one wonders where the Japanese American friends are in these times of need. Like so many other books about minorities, this story employs the stereotype of understanding persons from the majority culture rescuing minority characters from adversity.

Another negative chord is struck when someone is described as sitting "cross-legged . . . like an old Indian chief." And in one of the illustrations a man is shown fanning an elderly woman. Anyone familiar with the structure of a Japanese fan would realize that the man is holding the fan incorrectly.

Although *The Promised Year* ends happily with Uncle Henry and Keiko resolving their differences, the story fails to deal realistically with any of the difficulties a young girl might have adjusting to life in a new country. No problems or cultural barriers of any kind impede Keiko's entrance into American society. These omissions strongly promote the image of Keiko as the model minority type—sweet, charming and resourceful.

### Samurai of Gold Hill

by Yoshiko Uchida,
illustrated by Ati Forberg.
Charles Scribner's, 1972,
$4.95, 119 pages, grades 4-7

This novel traces the experiences of a young boy whose family supported the feudal dictatorship of the Tokugawas in Japan. Hoping to establish a sanctuary for their overthrown lord, the boy and his father journey to the U.S. and go to work at the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Colony, established in California in 1869. When the colony failed, its small group of workers (California's first Japanese immigrants) were abandoned by the agricultural entrepreneur, J. Henry Schnell, at Gold Hill.

Both Japanese and white characters are warmly depicted—except, of course, for the few townspeople who make life difficult for the colony. But although few records of the Wakamatsu Colony are left, it would seem that the difficulties, sacrifice, disappointments, spirit and resourcefulness and despair of its workers could have been conveyed by the author with greater passion.

### Shortstop from Tokyo

by Matt Christopher,
illustrated by Harvey Kidder.
Little, Brown, 1970,
$4.50, grades 4-6

Stogie Crane, shortstop for the Mohawks, feels secure in his position on the baseball team until Sam Suzuki of Japan appears on the scene. Sam can catch, hit and field extremely well. Stogie is envious of Sam's

ability and feels threatened by the latter's immediate popularity with the coach, team members and even Stogie's family. Gradually, the tension and suspicion give way to mutual acceptance by the two boys.

One cannot help but take note of the way in which baseball is played in this story. As with many sports in the U.S., the Mohawk team members are encouraged to beat opposing teams at all costs, and to jockey for positions of status in their relations with each other. Naturally, the by-products of this approach are jealousy and animosity. And just as naturally, children who are conditioned through books such as this one can be expected to develop highly competitive attitudes about both sports and about life in general.

Although the book's title refers to Sam Suzuki, its main character is Stogie Crane. Stogie's thoughts and feelings are emphasized by the use of italics; those of Sam remain a mystery. Knowing little about Sam, the reader has little empathy with him. Given the listing of the book under the subject heading of "Japanese in the U.S." in *Children's Books in Print*, this reviewer expected to read about a Japanese boy in America. Instead, here is another entry in the "my impressions of 'X' from Asia" sweepstakes, which offers little insight into Asian Americans.

### Tradition

by Anne Emery.
Vanguard Press, 1946,
$3.50, 250 pages, grades 7-up

Stacy, a popular high school senior, and her friends live comfortable, fun-filled lives in a middle-class, tradition-bound community.

Then the Okamotos move next door. Through her association with Dorothy Okamoto, Stacy learns about life's more serious side as Dorothy recounts her recent experiences as a concentration camp inmate. When a vocal minority of students starts a vicious campaign to drive the Okamotos out, Stacy finds herself in the eye of a storm. Beginning to question the real meaning of friendship and the principles of fair play and democracy, she takes a stand. Finally, other students rally around Stacy and the Okamotos and successfully defeat the "troublemakers."

*Tradition* is engrossing reading, and the author is to be commended for trying to deal straightforwardly with the anti-Japanese American feelings which raged after World War II. Unfortunately, time and social change cast in bold relief the datedness of this 1946 book. Ms. Emery's portrayal of Japanese Americans, though well-intended and deliberately positive, is filled with racist stereotyping. Charlie and Dorothy Okamoto are both straight-A students who also excel in sports and music. Calm, reserved and passive, they emerge as "super-Japs"—perfect examples of the model minority myth. Their older brother, Bill, dies in combat in Burma

*A Japanese American child displays her "exotic" kimono.*

proving his loyalty as an American (ironically, he is killed by American soldiers who mistake him for the enemy). It should also be noted that this latter contrivance is based on an historical inaccuracy: All Japanese American soldiers were sent to the European front.

A patronizing, "white-man's-burden" tone, which pervades the whole book, is most pronounced at the end when credit for the "Creed for Americans' " final victory goes, not to the Okamotos and the Japanese American cause, but to Stacy and the "American Way."

*Tradition* is also filled with traditional sexist images of men and women. Tall, Nordic beauties are do-nothing bunnies; girls are constantly described as envious, catty and malicious. Handsome, glamorous boys are popular and sought-after even though they may be temperamental and manipulative, while "nice" but unattractive boys are well-liked by everyone yet rarely considered seriously as prospective beaus.

Despite the author's attempt to promote positive alternatives to racist behavior, her solutions are unrealistic in view of the historical fact that a vocal and powerful minority succeeded in prevailing over the Stacys and other decent Americans.

### The Two Worlds of Noriko

by Vivian Breck.
Doubleday, 1966,
$3.25, 190 pages, grades 7-11

Bicultural conflict is the major theme of this romance about a second generation Japanese American girl who is torn between the desire to be free and independent like other recent college graduates and her desire to please her tradition-bound, immigrant parents. When her father tries to force Noriko to marry a distant cousin while on their trip to Japan, Noriko rebels, placing her own happiness over obedience to her parents.

Written in pre-feminist 1966, this book is thoroughly sexist. A beautiful, flirtatious little "doll," Noriko is careful not to offend men by being too serious or philosophical. Her life revolves around the men in her life, and the other women in the book are equally weak and dependent.

Although the author displays some understanding of Noriko's dilemma, racist American chauvinism prevails overall. With descriptions of Japanese customs like "gift-babies" ceremonies, the reader is constantly reminded that Japanese Americans are "foreigners." Particularly offensive are Ken and Noriko's self-deprecating conversations about being Japanese American and their constant need to explain themselves to whites as though they were novelties on display. (These two emerge as real "bananas"—yellow on the outside, white on the inside.) Their negative attitudes about themselves are reinforced by Noriko's view of other minorities, revealed in such comments as "all this Spanish and Mexican stuff." Another time, the author tries to justify the U.S. devastation of Hiroshima by equating it with the attack on Pearl Harbor.

### What It's All About

by Norma Klein.
Dial Press, 1975,
$5.95, 160 pages, grades 5-up

Bernadette's parents are divorced. Her Japanese American father, Fumio, lives in California. Eleven-year-old Bern lives a relatively "normal," New York middle-class life with her Jewish mother and stepfather, Gabe. Her mother adopts Suzu, a Vietnamese orphan, who becomes very attached to Bern. When Gabe loses his job, arguments flare until one day Gabe leaves.

Bern cannot understand why people get married if all they do is fight. She is torn between living with Fumio and his new wife, where she would have a "regular" two-parent family, or staying with Mom and Suzu. Finally, Bern discovers that a family can be close, strong and loving even though it does not fit the two-parent mold.

This is a warm, witty, down-to-earth, readable book about divorce and its effects on children. On the whole, women are portrayed as strong and varied, not stereotypical or one-dimensional.

However, although one of Bern's parents is Japanese American, the Asian aspect of her identity is never dealt with except in terms of her Japanese name. She is portrayed as an all-American girl whose father just happens to be Japanese American. Moreover, classic stereotypical adjectives are used to describe Fumio—he is "quiet, extremely kind, polite." His image

suffers in comparison to Gabe's strong one. Also, what message does the author convey when she has Fumio marry only white women?

Lastly, Ms. Klein sinks to the depths of stereotyping when she lumps all Asian groups together. Bern explains that Mom adopted Suzu "so that we both would have an Oriental heritage."

## Histories and Biographies

### Burma Rifles: A Story of Merrill's Marauders

by Frank Bonham.
T.Y. Crowell, 1960,
$4.95, grades 7-up

This book describes the heroic service of Nisei men as combat interpreters for "Merrill's Marauders" in Burma during World War II. Based on fact, the story is a readable and interesting "war adventure" for young people. However, its adventurous tone detracts from the author's attempt to show that the Nisei were expected to be 200 per cent Americans despite the racist violence committed against them.

The fault is not only one of omission, but of emphasis. The author's description of white American attitudes toward the Nisei during the months following Pearl Harbor, and prior to the internment of West Coast Japanese Americans, is good but does not reveal the depth of white hostility. Mr. Bonham leads readers to believe that abuse of Japanese American property was the fullest extent of that hostility when, in fact, the Nisei feared for their lives. The cruel herding of the Nisei into wartime assembly centers is not cited except to say that they were limited to "one suitcase each" and were picked up by trucks (in reality, they were often transported like cattle). No mention is made of the machine gun-toting guards or of the barbed wire that surrounded the camps. In the absence of such references, readers may not grasp the irony of a situation in which young Nisei had to demonstrate loyalty and heroism in service to a country which had confined them and their families in concentration camps as "traitors."

Another fault is that the author seems to condone use of the term "Jap." While his depiction of non-Japanese American soldiers using the term is no doubt accurate, he also has the Nisei use it. Would the Nisei call the Japanese the same name that had been flung in their faces when they were driven from their homes?

Mr. Bonham admires the Nisei but, like many white "friends" of Japanese Americans, he seems to believe that his good will allows him latitude. One seriously questions how well the author understands the real reason the Nisei soldiers fought to prove their loyalty to this country—that despite being considered "Japs," they struggled against prejudice and suspicion to be regarded as "Americans"—a struggle which years after World War II has yet to be positively resolved.

### Farewell to Manzanar

Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and
James Houston. Bantam Books, 1974,
$1.25, 145 pages, grades 8-up

*Farewell to Manzanar* is an autobiographical account of a seven-year-old girl's (the co-author's) experiences growing up at Manzanar, one of the largest of the concentration camps which confined 110,000 Japanese Americans during World War II. Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston sensitively portrays the daily routine of camp life (which ironically included "all-American" activities like the Boy Scouts, baton twirling, glee clubs and jitterbugging) as well as the ways in which camp conditions and government actions eroded the stability of the Japanese American family unit, especially by stripping Isseis (first generation Americans) and all Asian American men of their dignity and spirit. The book also offers fleeting glimpses of the strength of individual persons—like the protagonist's mother who defiantly smashes her cherished china set rather than sell it to a scalper, or the internees' collective resistance to the arrest of a popular young cook.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of the camp episode was the irreparable psychological damage done to some Niseis, as evidenced by the author's constant apology for her Japanese heritage. White American to the core in values and ideals, she has rejected her Japanese identity in order to survive and be accepted as a "loyal American." Her and other Niseis' ultimate act to overcome their doubt and insecurity is to marry a white, as though they could achieve social acceptance through the osmosis of association.

*Farewell to Manzanar* is both a valuable historical document of the suffering and humiliation experienced by a community of Asian Americans and, at the same time, a prime example of the resulting damage.

Commenting on her revisit to Manzanar 27 years after the internment, Mrs. Houston reassures her American readers that she has "nearly outgrown the shame and guilt and sense of unworthiness." Instead of expressing outrage at the U.S. government's racism, she seems to say, "It's ok, America, you made a mistake, but I promise to try harder to forget." In short, she has fully assimilated the white American perspective regarding U.S. society's atrocious treatment of its minorities.

In describing the father's tears always as "mysterious and incomprehensible," the book reinforces the concept that Japanese Americans are forever foreign. The author further perpetuates the emasculation of Asian American men through her stated preference for white men, while simultaneously exploiting to her own advantage the racist-sexist attraction white men have for "exotic" Asian women. Instead of fully crediting her father for his determination and fighting spirit, Mrs. Houston credits the greatness of America! "One of the amazing things about America is the way it can both undermine you, keep you believing in your own possibilities, pumping you with hope." America has certainly succeeded in duping Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston!

Although *Farewell to Manzanar* has an aura of authenticity regarding this critical period of Asian American history, it fails to offer consistently strong and healthy alternatives for Asian Americans and others struggling with contemporary racism. As long as this kind of cosmetic approach to hard realities persists, wherein an unjustly wronged victim refuses to point the finger of blame, much can be learned but little gained.

Originally written as an adult book and published by Houghton Mifflin in 1973, *Farewell to Manzanar* was recently selected by Scholastic Book Service for its Teen-Age Book Club (it was also filmed recently for TV; see "Media Monitor," page 37).

### Isamu Noguchi: The Life of a Sculptor

by Tobi Tobias,
illustrated by photographs.
T.Y. Crowell, 1974,
$5.95, 45 pages, grades 2-5

This biography of Isamu Noguchi, son of a Japanese father and a white American mother, is thorough, albeit somewhat bland. In simple, clear language and images, the author has managed to integrate the personal life experiences, motivations and outside forces which contributed to Noguchi's development as a sculptor. He emerges as a real person—neither a god because of his fame nor a cardboard stereotype.

The author is also to be commended for attempting to deal straightforwardly with the sensitive questions of Noguchi's interracial/intercultural identity and his particular predicament during the World War II internment of Japanese Americans. Originally, because of his half-white status, Noguchi was not forced to go into a camp. He then chose to do so, hoping to make the camps better places to live. Ironically, when he asked to be released, the government refused for seven months on the ground of his being Japanese American. This rude awakening led Noguchi to admit that he still felt "like a prisoner in his own country." Yet, by equating the camps with "jails" and the effects of racism with the tribulations of a prison experience, the author reveals her unwillingness to unequivocally indict the government's unjust actions. Nor does she exonerate Japanese Americans from any charges of disloyalty. Her superficial, non-controversial treatment of these issues leaves the impression that she wanted to dispense with this unpleasant matter quickly and move on to

the safer subject of Noguchi's artistic endeavors.

The effort is made to deglamorize the artist's life by not focusing on gallery openings, personal fame and wealth. Instead, Ms. Tobias stresses the hard work, risks, compromises and commitment required of all artists. She also emphasizes the artist's concept of popularizing sculpture—taking it out of the galleries and museums into the streets, parks and homes to give it a wider base rather than reserving it for the elite few. Most importantly, Noguchi is presented in a down-to-earth, humanistic manner, with beautiful photographs of his works and various work studios adding depth and sensitivity to the portrait.

This is a good introductory work for young readers who are interested in art and how it expresses an artist's personal values and lifestyle. However, mature supervision would be required to offset its often weak treatment of the Japanese American experience.

### The Japanese Helped Build America

by Dorothy and Joseph Dowdell,
illustrated by Len Ebert.
Julian Messner, 1970,
$4.79, 96 pages, grades 3-6

An insipid history of Japanese and Japanese Americans in the U.S. presented in a partly fictional, partly factual format. Among its many historical inaccuracies is the statement that Japan's industrial revolution and the downfall of the Tokugawa occurred because "the commoners were ready for a change." There are stereotyped characterizations ("Japanese children were quiet and modest"; "Japanese are artistic people"; "Like his parent he was short and sturdy"), as well as mistakes in names and translation of phrases and inaccurate illustrations ("Murikama" is not a Japanese name; *Kenjinkai* does not translate as "same place, same people," and Japanese teachers do not wear Korean costumes as shown in one picture). In addition, the author promotes the notion that the Japanese "have earned the right to walk in peace and dignity among their fellow Americans" through the exercise of respect, discipline and diligence.

Anti-Asian laws, racism and the World War II experience of Japanese Americans are superficially treated. No bibliography is given.

### The Japanese in America

by Noel L. Leathers, illustrated.
Lerner Publications, 1967 (rev. 1974),
$3.95, 70 pages, grades 5-11

It is frightening to think that this simplistic history for upper elementary and junior high school children is in its fifth printing.

"Commodore Perry convinced the Japanese to open their ports," states the text, with no reference to the West's role in Asia at the time or to Western bombardment of Japanese ports. "Emperor Meiji . . . began to modernize his nation" (nations are not modernized by one ruler); Japanese emigration occurred because many "objected to the modernization of Japan," and the forced confinement of Japanese Americans during World War II might have been "the best way to protect them." These dangerous statements will be accepted by children (and adults) who lack historical perspective and knowledge about the forces which shape history. No bibliography is given (and Samuel Ichiye Hayakawa's middle name is spelled "Ichyle"—an ignorant mistake).

Through their contributions to American life, Japanese Americans are said to have "won a place in the hearts of all Americans," with a number of success stories being offered in support of this point. Patriotism of the traditional variety is promoted throughout the book.

### Journey to Topaz

by Yoshiko Uchida,
illustrated by Donald Carrick.
Charles Scribner's, 1971,
$4.95, 149 pages, grades 4-6

Eleven-year-old Yuki and her family are taken from a protected life in Berkeley to the barbed-wire-fence camp in Topaz, Utah. This is a factual account of the author's own experiences during the forced evacuation of Japanese Americans after Pearl Harbor.

Much of the novel is moving, sad and painful, but it is written from a perspective that accepts and does not protest the circumstances that produced the Topazes, the Tule Lakes and the Manzanars. Instead, the author justifies the internment of 110,000 Americans as an act attributable to war hysteria. An emotionally laden historic injustice becomes bland and colorless.

### Justice Denied: A History of the Japanese in the United States

by Jennifer Cross, illustrated.
Scholastic Book Services, 1974,
$1.65, 128 pages, grades 4-8

A liberal and essentially apologist history, in which excellent photographs tell a more compelling and accurate story than the lengthy text. The treatment of Japanese immigrants and their children during World War II is judged to have been unjust because they are patriotic, hard-working (model) Americans. War hysteria is cited as the reason for the U.S. government's "mistake." The book ends with a plea for faith in American democracy, and Japanese Americans are cited for having made great political and economic strides—proof that the Horatio Alger myth is real.

No bibliography is given, and Gordon Hirabayashi is mistakenly called Gordon Hirabashi.

# KOREAN AMERICAN

## Picture Books

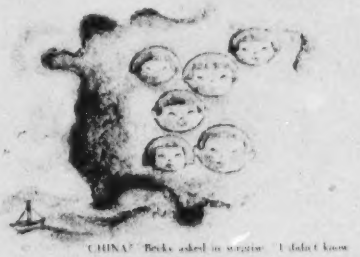
### Chinese Eyes

by Marjorie Wayhill,
illustrated by Pauline Cutrell.
Herald Press, 1974,
$5.95, grades p.s.-2

This book tries to deal with the sensitive subject of racist name-calling and its effects on a young girl named Becky. Readers learn, in the Afterword about the author and illustrator, that the character is based on the author's own adopted Korean child of the same name. In the story, when Becky goes home to a white mother without explanation, readers may be confused. When Becky is called "Chinese Eyes" by some older boys in school, "She just wanted to hide her face." The bad feelings she experiences are the same as those elicited whenever children call her best friend Laura (who is Black) "ugly names."

At home, Becky hesitantly tells her mother about the name-calling incident. Mom thinks it is no big thing and casually explains to Becky that her eyes are similar to those of children in China. She also says that although Becky's eyes are shaped differently than hers, they both are able to see, and although her nose is shorter than Mom's, they can both smell flowers—the message being that physical differences are unimportant. We are all basically the same—a familiar old song.

Although the author tries to handle this matter sensitively, her approach is limited, evasive, and unrealistic. True, minority



CHINA? Becky asked in surprise. I didn't know there was a place called China. Suddenly she smiled all over. They have Chinese eyes! she exclaimed

*The concept that all Asians look exactly alike (with bowl haircuts and slanted slits for eyes) is reinforced in* Chinese Eyes.

children need personal confirmation that they are not weird or inferior because they look different from the majority, but the author's literal approach skirts the point that Becky must learn how to deal with social reality. Her mother's explanation diverts attention from the racism of the boys' remarks, reflecting a white person's lack of understanding of a minority child's pain and confusion. By encouraging Becky to internalize the problem, her mother promotes a passive reaction. Her response also reinforces the all-Asian-people-look-alike-stereotype in that Korean eyes are mistakenly thought to be the same as Chinese eyes.

This book is useful only as a discussion stimulator to seek out more realistic ways of dealing with racist name-calling.

## Juvenile and Young Adult Fiction

### Understanding Kim

written and illustrated
by Pelagie Doane.
Lippincott, 1962, $2.95, grades 4-6

*Understanding Kim* concerns the "problems" encountered by an American family, the Crandalls, in their adoption of a ten-year-old Korean orphan named Kim, as well as the problems Kim faces as an Asian orphan in America.

Kim is a composite of assorted Asian stereotypes, and the family's attempts to "understand" her are entirely patronizing and superficial. A victim of the "China Doll" syndrome ("Somehow Kim seemed more like a doll than she did like a real live girl," says Penny Crandall, who is Kim's age), she is regarded and treated as less than human. The Crandalls fret frequently over her inability to speak correctly (as everyone in the U.S. knows, Asians cannot roll their "r's" properly), and in addition to the funny way she talks, Kim also has a funny walk—"with mincing little steps," says Penny's friend, Judy.

The few references that are made to Kim's country of origin depict it as a place of wretchedness and deprivation. When Kim brings a cake upstairs to her room, Penny takes the opportunity to reassure her that there will be food forever in her new home, unlike in Korea.

To resolve the problem of Kim "being accepted" by Penny and by her schoolmates, the author has Kim risk her life during a fire in the Crandall home. When she rushes bravely into the burning house to rescue Penny's kitten, she wins admiration. What would have happened if the fire had not occurred and given Kim the opportunity to "prove" herself? The author deals with her subject without depth or understanding as to how a minority child feels in a new land.

# VIETNAMESE AMERICAN

## Picture Books

### First Snow

by Helen Coutant,
illustrated by Vo-Dinh.
Knopf, 1974, $4.50, grades 1-3

The only children's picture book about Vietnamese Americans published to date, *First Snow* represents a pleasant departure from the stereotype of stern and traditional Asian American grandparents. However, it provides only a very limited amount of information about Vietnamese American life, being essentially an attempt to deal with the subject of death in a non frightening way.

Lien asks her parents, "What does it mean that Grandmother is dying?" No verbal response is given; instead her parents pick her up and hold her close to them. Understandably, Lien is confused by their inadequate response and becomes more determined to find an answer. When she queries her grandmother, the old woman explains (in somewhat metaphysical terms) that death is a transformation from one state to another, using as an analogy Lien's own first experience with a New England snowfall.

The warm rapport between Lien and her grandmother is conveyed in the sensitive black-and-white illustrations, as well as in the text.

## Juvenile and Young Adult Fiction

### Promises to Keep

by Paige Dixon.
Atheneum, 1974,
$6.95, 165 pages, grades 10-up

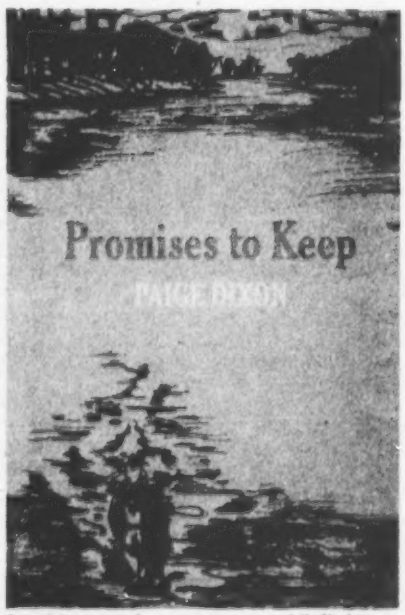
*Promises to Keep* belongs to that genre of books in which a minority person comes to an all-white community, exposes provincial and racist attitudes, and singlehandedly changes everybody's values and outlook.

The orphaned son of a Vietnamese woman and an American soldier, fourteen-year-old Lon Miller has come to a New England village to live with the town's most prestigious family. His presence and pacifist principles challenge the townspeople's, and especially Grandmother Miller's, unquestioned principles of democracy, competition and patriotism. Eventually things come to a head: The family and community become polarized, and the Millers are forced to clarify and stand behind their beliefs. An unfaltering model of personal strength and integrity, Lon serves as a catalyst for social change. In particular, he gives his cousin Charles (the book's narrator) strength to pursue his own ambitions rather than attend West Point—which Grandmother Miller wants him to do.

Although the book's ultimate anti-war, anti-racist and anti-elitist messages are well intended, *Promises to Keep* still projects many racist and sexist attitudes. Lon's character is difficult to swallow: He is talented, wise and peace-loving and has good grades, good looks and good manners. In short, he is a "super-gook," whose superior qualities elicit an outpouring of white American guilt about racism and the war in Vietnam. At the same time, rabid bigots (the Red Flames) are written off as mere troublemakers, thus absolving the guilt-ridden and reconfirming the basic goodness of the American Way.

The book's general image of women is relentlessly sexist. On the one hand, they are weak, emotional and irrational (with the exception of the grandmother, who goes to the other extreme) and, on the other, indispensable—the absence of a woman in the Parrish family is given as the reason for Joey Parrish's rise as a troublemaker. Women are thus damned if they do, and damned if they don't. Moreover, insinuations are made that all Asian women are unscrupulous at best, and prostitutes at worst.

Although *Promises to Keep* attempts to deal straightforwardly with white racism and American chauvinism, the book ends up being a guilt-ridden apologia in which real solutions are not proposed.




*In this novel, a 'super gook" fights a town's racism.*

# GENERAL

*"This [camp] was made up of individual houses in an attractive setting," reads the caption in* East Meets West, *making the internment camp sound like a resort.*

## Picture Books

### The Boy Who Spoke Chinese

written and illustrated
by Jessi a Krasilovsky.
Doubleday, 1972,
$4.95, unpaged, grades p.s.-2

The protagonist in this incredibly racist book is a white boy who, his sister says, "can't speak English very well" because he was born in China. Throughout the book, the sister seeks to explain the boy's silly attention-getting antics by comparing them—in a supposedly humorous manner—to the way she thinks people behave in China. Statements such as "They all eat worms in China"; "Everybody wears funny hats in China"; "All Chinese men wear them" (pajamas), etc., are made without any qualifications whatsoever. The book purveys stereotyped images of the Chinese as strange, inscrutable, faceless, nameless masses who look and act ridiculously alike.

### The Widdles

by Pearl Augusta Harwood,
illustrated by Henning Black Jensen.
Lerner Publications, 1966,
$3.95, 28 pages, grades p.s.-4

This is a strangely plastic story.

Mr. and Mrs. Widdle have a "very big house" and decide to fill it up with children instead of with more furniture. They dispassionately collect Chinese American, Japanese American, Spanish American and a set of Hawaiian American twins to fill their house. Somehow, this multiracial "home" is completely lacking in emotional warmth; it is one in which children are treated as objects rather than as live people.

The people at the orphanage which supplies the children tell the Widdles, "we have *something*—that is just *one* year old today." The Widdles ask, "Is the *something* a little girl?" Upon getting the twins, Papa Widdle remarks, "*This* is just what we need for that empty bedroom." Also, the boys continue to call their adoptive father Mr. Widdle.

The illustrations depict the children as look-alikes, and the mother is repeatedly shown in the kitchen cooking, setting the table, etc., while the males sit at the table. The boys are shown helping their father in the garden but never in the kitchen helping Mrs. Widdle.

## Histories and Biographies

### Asians in the West

by Edwin P. Hoyt.
Thomas Nelson, 1974,
$5.95, 159 pages

This general history of various Asian groups' experience in Western countries focuses on the Chinese and Japanese in the U.S. and Hawaii and includes two short chapters about East Indians in South Africa. Through an abundance of details, facts and personalized accounts, author Hoyt hits hard at the history of injustice and racism experienced by Asian immigrants in the U.S. Especially thorough and forthright is his account of the World War II internment of Japanese Americans and the 442nd Battalion (composed of Nisei soldiers).

Although the author's premise that "racial intolerance is basically an economic matter" is right on target, he dissipates his argument by blaming individual prejudice instead of institutional racism. For example, the white working class receives the onus of blame for the intense anti-Chinese violence of the 1870's and '80's, absolving the businessmen and politicians who used the Chinese as scapegoats to deflect white workers' attention from the real causes of their economic plight. Furthermore, little is made of the economic reasons underlying the "relocation" of Japanese Americans into concentration camps during World War II.

Ultimately, *Asians in the West* emerges as another one of those books which classifies America's past racism as "unfortunate chapters" in history. The book's final chapters serve to reinforce the myth of the American dream and the Asians-as-model-minority syndrome. The author's true perspective is reflected in his indices for success and assimilation into the American mainstream—namely, education, professional jobs, monetary success and marriage with whites, in addition to such "contributions" as Chinese and Japanese food, silk, porcelain and gunpowder.

### A Child in Prison Camp

written and illustrated
by Shizuye Takashima.
William Morrow, 1974,
$6.95, 63 pages, grades 7-9

This is the story of the author's experiences in a Canadian prison camp during World War II when Japanese Canadian families were confined. The family's forced separation, departure, loss of home and friends and existence in a virtual wilderness are told movingly but with a childlike innocence about the forces which made these events occur. The result is that a violent and bitter historical experience is presented passively and forgivingly. Illustrations by the author are beautiful and serene.

### East Meets West

by George Goldberg
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970,
$5.95, grades 11-up

This purports to be a documented history of Chinese and Japanese Americans, beginning with the first immigration of Chinese to the U.S. and ending with the mass arrest and detention of 110,000 Japanese Americans in concentration camps during World War II. The concluding pages acknowledge that the U.S. made "mistakes" in the way it treated Asian immigrants but happily points out that, today, our Asian minorities are "indeed model citizens."

Although the author presents some interesting (though not always relevant) details, he has assiduously brought together under one cover practically every known stereotype about Asian Americans. Interestingly, while he cites the relationship between anti-Chinese and later anti-Japanese hostility and economic depression, he fails to make a strong and clear connection between economics and race. Indeed, not once is the word racism used in this book.

Although the author recognizes the injustice of the Japanese concentration camp ordeal, he dilutes that reality in an outburst of national chauvinism by concluding that the camps were not so bad, particularly when compared to the Nazi camps.

Racism surfaces in the book's smug, matter-of-fact discussion of imperialism: "America had just sliced Mexico in half. California was ours"; "It seemed only a matter of time until Japan's imperial ambitions in Asia would collide with the American presence there"—the author never questions what Americans were doing in Asia.

Finally, the author has the audacity to use the Chinese and Japanese experience to validate this country's greatness: "Today, Japanese are indeed model citizens" and "the Chinese too have arrived." (Blacks and other racial minorities are covertly urged by the author to view the Chinese and Japanese experience as evidence that discrimination can be overcome. They made it—why can't you?) He concludes, "We have done many things that were wrong. But most other nations have done far worse. That, after all, is why people have come to America from all over the world." What a finale!

# WHERE I'M COMING FROM

By Frank Chin

## A NOTED CHINESE AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHT'S THOUGHTS ON ASIAN AMERICANS IN U.S. LITERATURE

Memory of the links between the early Chinese and Japanese Americans' folk, popular and mythic images of themselves and today's Asian America is pretty well gone, thanks to the destruction of our history and culture by missionary science fiction from Charlie Chan to Pearl Buck to the ugly little *The Five Chinese Brothers*.

The subjugation of a people by the destruction of their history is a common theme in white science fiction from Homer to Ray Bradbury. In the early days of American science fiction, just before all the white writers left the planet to write about aliens in outer space, they wrote about aliens emigrating from Asia the way they wrote about invasions from Mars in the thirties. In *The Last Days of the Republic*, a racist piece of science fiction by P.W. Donner, the Chinese take over the United States. The way the Chinese demonstrate their power over whites is to destroy white history, erase it from memory until "The very name of the United States of America was thus blotted from the record of nations and peoples as unworthy of the poor boon of existence." That's from a typical racist novel of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A more familiar literary figure to today's reader would be Jack London, who also wrote science fiction disaster stories about the Yellow Peril. That's the kind of book the kids who grew up to be writers read when they were kids.

The people who are writing children's books today are promoting the missionary-invented notion that Asian American identity is a blend of "the best of the East and the best of the West." How strange that whites should regard this mythological psychoneurotic schizophrenia as being natural to Asian American culture but unnatural to white people. The white American founders of the republic rejected the idea that they were a blend of the best of the British subject and the best of the American colonialist. Whites accept as natural Sam Adams and Thomas Jefferson calling themselves simply Americans. But whites are offended at yellows rejecting the white lie of yellow dual identity and, for reasons known only to themselves, these whites—even after being told—continue to write the lie. . . .

Some of us yellows believe the mission of education and children's literature is to make Asians and Asian Americans acceptable to whites, to prove to whites we are not hostile, not bitter about the past, not dangerous and otherwise believe exactly what whites believe. These yellows use terms like "dominant culture," "host society," "Universal Man," "just plain folks," "everyman," "just anybody" and "human being" as code words for white. They would use Asian American subject matter and have Asian American writers become accomplices to pushing white history, white heroes and morality as the measure of universality, instead of our own history, heroes, morality and culture. Because our American history and culture aren't well known to whites doesn't mean they are foreign to America. It means that whites are culturally deprived.

Only in the works of Taro Yashima and Lawrence Yep are the literary sensibility, language and vision of the universe Asian and Asian American. Their books respect the integrity of, and celebrate, Asian and Asian American culture, instead of being white sci-fi tales about people who popped out of the white imagination. What Yashima assumes to be a normal childhood is what a Japanese in Japanese culture views as a normal childhood. He neatly alerts white kids and American yellow kids to the fact that they're different from Japanese kids of Japan by calling the Americans "you." But instead of proving that Japanese kids are like American kids (a sell-out approach) and awakening American kids to a sense of universality in that white-biased and corny way, Yashima proves, by portraying his village and hunting shrimp as common and everyday, that American kids are something like Japanese kids. In *The Village Tree*, a letter to all the non-Japanese kids west of Japan, he writes: "Do you know a country / far, far to the east, /that we call Japan?"/ Do you know, there too / we have many children / like you? The essence of Yashima's work springs from the language and art of a Japanese American Issei man who was a boy in Japan and whose awareness of himself is not based on the existence of white racism. . . .

People are pushing "interaction with the dominant group" as a criteria for children's books on yellows and badmouthing books that show Asian Americans socializing exclusively with their own. We're teaching

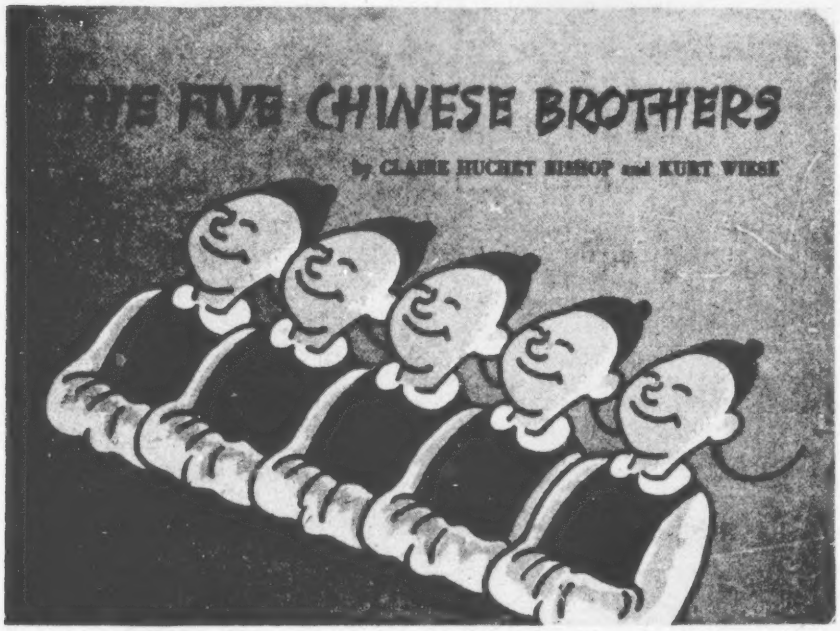
yellow kids to value white society above their own with that "interaction with the dominant culture" line.

Yep's *Dragonwings* is not a yellow man living in white society, because that is not his way of seeing Chinese Americans. What Yep has produced is the first book to capture the arrogant style of spoken Cantonese and create out of it a new American English. He's not telling a white sobsister's minority success story. Yellows don't think of themselves as particularly minor in this book. His story is about a Chinese man who came to America to start a family and challenge the unknown in a new country. His life here somehow brought the best out of him, and he had big ideas, daring plans and a Chinese American son to help him take to the air. In *Dragonwings*, Yep has written an Asian American myth that will someday be as deeply rooted in American folklore as Paul Bunyan and Johnny Appleseed. The lives of Yep's people suggest that there is a spirit of adventure which is uniquely Chinese American and which smacks of legend, both in the language and in the sense the language makes. Yep's myth gives yellow kids a taste of Asian American history and spirit as they grow up thinking and reading about their people.

Asian American kids are looking for Asian American characters with a style that commands attention and respect in terms they can understand. We need more Taro Yashimas and Lawrence Yeps. We need a body of Asian American myth to form and express what we value in ourselves and our history. If we don't satisfy our needs for Asian American myth, we'll continue as Asian Americans to draw upon the only myth that binds us all together now—the myth of white supremacy and yellow dependency.

**About the Author**

*Frank Chin is the author of the plays* Chickencoop Chinaman *and* The Year of the Dragon. *A co-editor of* Aiiieeeee!, *and the* Yardbird Reader, Volume 3, *he has been a writer in residence and taught Asian American studies at the University of California at Berkeley.*




*Perhaps no single book has so insidiously stereotyped the Chinese as* The Five Chinese Brothers. *From this still popular "classic," published in 1938, generations of children have come to believe that all Asian and people of Asian descent are a putrid yellow, have slits for eyes, look exactly alike and act the fool.* The Five Chinese Brothers *is an insult to Asian Americans the way* Little Black Sambo *is an insult to Black people.*


**EIGHTH ANNUAL CONTEST FOR THIRD WORLD WRITERS**

**5**
**PRIZES OF**
**$500**
**EACH**

**For African American, American Indian, Asian American, Chicano and Puerto Rican writers who are unpublished in the children's book field**

Minority writers are invited to submit manuscripts for children's books. Any literary form except plays is acceptable—picture book, story, poetry, fiction or non-fiction—as long as it is free of racist and sexist stereotypes and is relevant to minority struggles for liberation. For contest rules, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the Contest Committee, Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1841 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023.

**CONTEST ENDS DEC. 31, 1976**

# ASIAN AMERICAN HISTORY:

*The following "polar statements" have been adapted from a book on analyzing history and social studies texts for racism and sexism which the CIBC will publish this fall. For sources on the "omitted information" and for additional information we refer readers to the bibliography of recommended materials on pages 32-34.*

## CHINESE AMERICANS

### DISTORTION

**Until very recently, the U.S. Chinese communities have been passive and uncomplaining.** Textbook example: "Dramatic—if less evident—changes have taken place in traditionally 'quiet' Asian communities." *The American Experience,* page 643, Addison-Wesley, 1975

### REALITY

Chinese Americans have a rich history of actively resisting racist oppression. Examples of such resistance are: the 1867 strike by 7,000 Chinese laborers against the Central Pacific Railroad; the 1933 organization of the Chinese Hand Laundry Alliance to fight discrimination in New York; the 1936 union fight in Alaska won by a combination of Asian American, Chicano and white cannery workers; and the successful 14-week garment strike in 1938 by Chinese American women.

### DISTORTION

**A new phenomenon is the rebellion of Asian American youth against discrimination in styles which run counter to the cultural values and traditions of their elders.** Textbook example: "Whereas elderly Asian Americans have been content to maintain life styles based on the traditional values of their cultures, the youth have been growing increasingly rebellious. This rebellion has been against the docile acceptance of discrimination by their elders, against whites for their discriminatory practices, and against traditional Asian values. The outcome of this emerging attitude has been the formation of militant groups which have lashed out against one another as well as other racial and ethnic minorities of the city." *The American Experience,* page 645, Addison-Wesley, 1975

### REALITY

Most of the ancestors of Chinese Americans came from the southeastern provinces of China, which have a long tradition of struggle. The people in those provinces were responsible for the revolution which ended the Manchu dynasty and for the Taiping and Boxer rebellions. They continued their activist traditions in the U.S. Thus, the militancy of today's young Chinese does not imply a rejection of Asian values but reflects a new pride in their heritage. There are differences of opinion among Asian Americans, as among all minority and majority ethnic groups. But despite their lack of total unity, both past and present Chinese Americans have united with other working people in a common fight against injustice.

### DISTORTION

**Textbooks give as the main reason for Chinese immigration that they came to the U.S. to seek their fortunes.** Textbook example: "While adventurous nineteenth century Americans sought their fortunes in China, thousands of Chinese crossed the Pacific in the opposite direction for the same reason. At first they came to look for gold in California in 1849." *The Impact of Our Past,* page 547, McGraw-Hill, 1972

### REALITY

The Chinese came here driven by dire economic pressures. During the 1800's, life in China was disrupted by Western colonialization, natural disasters and famine. In the U.S., industrialists were expanding westward and wanted a larger labor force. Hence, U.S. business interests launched an aggressive recruitment campaign to attract Chinese workers.

### DISTORTION

**The achievements of Chinese Americans, if noted at all, are interpreted as minor contributions.** Textbook example: "For a time, Chinese workers were in great demand. They helped build the transcontinental railroads." *America: Its People and Values,* page 551, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975

### REALITY

The western section of the transcontinental railroad was almost totally a Chinese achievement. At first considered "too small" for heavy railroad work, the Chinese were hired by the Central Pacific in small numbers on an experimental basis. Eventually, over 12,000 performed nearly all of the dangerous construction work. They worked from sun-up to sun-down, six days a week, through the worst recorded blizzards, for $26 per month. Many hundreds died in construction acci-

# DE-MYTHIFYING TEXTBOOKS

dents. By contrast, the railroad owners, in addition to free land, received $16,000 to $48,000 from the U.S. Treasury for each mile constructed.

### DISTORTION

**The Chinese were unpopular because they were "willing" to work for low wages.** Textbook example: "Because they [the Chinese] were willing to work for low wages, there was a fear that they would take jobs away from Americans." *The Pageant of American History*, page 415, Allyn & Bacon, 1975

### REALITY

The Chinese, like all other people, took the best work and wages available. After completion of the railroad, some worked in land reclamation and, by 1884, constituted over 50 per cent of California's farm labor force. They were the mainstay of the early woolen and cigar-making industries and were active in canning and garment making. When a depression in the 1870's decreased labor needs, anti-Chinese hostility by white workers was encouraged by media, government, unions, and business. As a result, the Chinese were driven out of the labor market and forced into such service industries as the laundry and restaurant—fields considered "unmanly" by whites.

### DISTORTION

**Textbooks depict oppression against the Chinese as "unfortunate" instances of discrimination and violence caused by some bigoted whites.** Textbook example: "Often there was trouble between the Chinese and other workers." *America: Its People and Values*, page 551, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975

*The above illustration from a French book depicts Chinese laborers on strike, an aspect of Asian American history rarely noted in American books. The picture is part of a slide presentation for grades 4-12 by William Loren Katz, who can be reached in care of the CIBC.*

### REALITY

Some examples of little-known, yet extensive violence, are the lynching of 22 Chinese, including women and children, in Los Angeles in 1871; the destruction of all Chinese homes and businesses in Denver in 1880; and the massacre of 28 Chinese in Rock Springs, Wyoming, in 1885. Acts of physical violence against the Chinese occurred in Seattle, Tacoma, and other U.S. cities, where the Chinese quarters were often burned.

### DISTORTION

**Textbooks omit or play down discriminatory laws against the Chinese.** Textbook example: "In the 1880's, the government acted. Chinese immigration was stopped by a new law passed by Congress." *America: Its People and Values*, page 551, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975

### REALITY

Textbooks rarely provide information about the numerous anti-Chinese acts and laws which preceded and followed the 1882 Exclusion Act. For example, in 1854, Chinese were denied the right to testify in court against whites. This decision was upheld in 1870 and, of course, resulted in violence against the Chinese—in whites robbing, killing and assaulting Chinese with impunity.

*Examples of restrictive immigration legislation are* "An Act to

Prevent the Further Immigration of Chinese or Mongolians to this State" (California), 1858; Scott Act, 1888—Chinese were forbidden to return to the U.S.; Geary Act, 1892—extended immigration restrictions for another decade, denied Chinese people the right to bail in habeas corpus proceedings and required all Chinese laborers to carry certificates of residence; Act of April 29, 1904—extended exclusion indefinitely.

*Examples of occupational restrictive legislation:* Foreign Miners tax of 1853—aimed at driving the Chinese from mining; San Francisco Anti-Ironing Ordinance of 1880—prohibited Chinese from ironing at night; and California Fish and Games Act of 1893—prohibited Chinese use of fishing nets.

*Examples of punitive legislation:* San Francisco Queue Ordinance, 1875—required the shaving of queues of Chinese in jail; San Francisco Cubic Air Law, 1873—arrested Chinese for living in a crowded room; and 14 out of 30 states specifically cited the Chinese in their miscegenation laws.

### ON "MOUNTAIN OF GOLD"

*Mountain of Gold* by Betty Lee Sung has profoundly influenced popular concepts of Chinese American history. Our review of its adaptation as a children's book (on page 13) is highly critical of Ms. Sung's perspective. The following excerpt from the book epitomizes her viewpoint: "Much to their credit, the Chinese view prejudice with a very healthy attitude. They were never overtly bitter. They have gone into occupations which command respect and which lessen conflict from competition. The Chinese are not concentrated entirely in one section of the country. More dispersion away from the vortexes of San Francisco and New York should be encouraged. This ought to be the long-range goal of the Chinese because distribution reduces the degree of visibility."

## JAPANESE AMERICANS

### DISTORTION

**Textbooks neglect to explain that American business encouraged the immigration of Japanese laborers.** Textbook example: "Around 1900 Japanese immigrants began to arrive in the West. They became farm workers and gardeners; many soon owned their own farms and businesses." *The Impact of Our Past,* page 548, McGraw-Hill, 1972

### REALITY

An acute labor shortage existed on the West Coast during the late 1800's. Following the legal exclusion of Chinese, Japanese were recruited for occupations in which the Chinese were once employed. They became active in fruit and vegetable canning and in lumbering and mining. Later, many became tenant farmers, and their achievements in turning wastelands into farmlands were well-known in the West.

### DISTORTION

**Textbooks minimize the extent of the official racism which Japanese immigrants experienced.** Textbook example: "Japanese immigrants ran into many of the same difficulties that the Chinese had faced earlier. Often, other Americans did not treat them fairly." *America: Its People and Values,* page 560, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975

### REALITY

Numerous laws have oppressed Japanese Americans. For example, in 1914, Takao Ozawa applied for U.S. citizenship. Born in Japan, he had lived in the U.S. for over 20 years. In 1922, the Supreme Court ruled that he (and other foreign-born Japanese) was ineligible for citizenship based on the Naturalization Act of 1790. In the same year, Congress passed the Cable Act which stated: ". . . any woman who marries an alien ineligible for citizenship shall cease to be an American citizen." This meant that if a U.S.-born Nisei Japanese (or a white woman) married a man born in Japan, she lost her citizenship. The right of a Japanese-born person to U.S. citizenship was not granted until *1953.*

A series of Alien Land Laws were passed in Western states stipulating that persons ineligible for citizenship had no right to own or lease agricultural land. The constitutionality of these laws was tested many times, but it was not until 1948 (Oyama *vs.* U.S.) that the Alien Land Laws were struck down. A California law, in 1943, barred "aliens ineligible for citizenship" from getting commercial fishing licenses. The Supreme Court struck this law down in 1947.

### DISTORTION

**The internment of 110,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry in concentration camps during World War II is, when mentioned, treated as an unfortunate chapter in our otherwise democratic history.** Textbook example: "Japanese Americans living on the Pacific Coast were especially hard hit. They were victims of hysteria brought on by the war. . . ." *In Search of America,* page 79, Ginn and Co. (Xerox), 1975

### REALITY

The long-practiced racism against Japanese Americans (see above), not mere wartime "hysteria," must be seen as the cause of the internment. Texts should place it in this context, as well as discuss the economic concerns of whites, who benefited by the elimination of Japanese business competition. The racist implications of the fact that German and Italian Americans faced no such treatment should be discussed. Texts should use the term "concentration camps" and should note that it was not until 1971 that Title II of the Internal Security Act, which justified the legal detention of individuals in such camps, was repealed.

### DISTORTION

**Textbooks imply that Japanese Americans have forgiven and forgotten their wartime internment.** Textbook example: "The Japanese Americans seem not to have lost faith in the U.S. Most appear to have forgiven the government for violating their rights during World War II. Some of them even say that the whole affair was a 'helpful catastrophe.' It permitted young men to prove their loyalty by going to war." *Man in America*, page 572, Silver Burdett, 1974

### REALITY

Many Japanese Americans designate time by stating "before camp years" or "after camp years." In Japanese American newspapers around December there are sections devoted to accounts of experiences in the camps and debates on whether the Japanese should, or should not, have willingly entered them. Most Japanese Americans joined the war effort not to "prove their loyalty" to the U.S., but because they wanted to help overthrow fascism.

### DISTORTION

**Japanese Americans today have "made it" and are a "successful model minority."** Textbook example: "In California, descendents of Japanese immigrants have become very successful farmers. A number of Japanese Americans are now outstanding photographers, architects, and professors in American universities." *America: Its People and Values*, page 561, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975

### REALITY

Japanese Americans are often described as "successful" and, like the Chinese Americans, as a "model minority." Such descriptions obscure the realities of continued oppression against Japanese Americans, and they serve the racist purpose of pitting one minority group against another. The existence of Asian American ghettos belies the claim of success. Japanese Americans are sometimes called "Technical Coolies" because those who have advanced can only go so far, being excluded from the better and higher paying jobs. In Nihonmanchi, the Japanese equivalent to Chinatown, elderly Issei (first—immigrant—generation) and Nisei (second generation—born in the U.S.) are often denied necessary social services. Among the Sansei (third generation—children of the Nisei), drugs have been an acute problem. All of these problems are obscured by the rhetoric of success.

□

*The preceding article was adapted from* Stereotypes, Distortions and Omissions in U.S. History Textbooks: A Content Analysis Instrument for Detecting Racism and Sexism. *To be published this fall by the CIBC Racism and Sexism Resource Center for Educators, the book will also include chapters on other Third World people and women of all groups in U.S. history texts.*

### COMING SOON IN THE *BULLETIN*

A report on school textbook treatment of Asian peoples has just been published by the Asia Society. The report documents that white ethnocentric bias (sometimes blatant, more often subtle), which disparages the history of Asian peoples, is pervasive in textbooks.

Based on an evaluation by 200 scholars of 306 texts, the report contains many significant observations. It shows that white ethnocentrism is no less prevalent in more recently published texts than in older books, and that the most biased texts are those written by school principals and administrators.

A forthcoming article in the *Bulletin* will describe the report's findings and will offer practical pointers to teachers on how to use it in the classroom to counteract prevailing myths and stereotypes about Asia. A second article will analyze the significance and timing of the report.

For copies of the report, send requests to Cindy Rau, Asia Society, Educational Resources, 133 East 58th St., N.Y.,N.Y. 10021.

### Translating Names

"Authors at times go to great lengths to translate and emphasize the 'pretty' meanings behind some Chinese names, whereas in reality these literal meanings are rarely, if ever, mentioned in daily conversation. In addition the meanings of many names are derived from classical Chinese and are quite subtle. A Chinese would no more think of 'Bau-yu' as 'precious jade' than the American would think of 'Shakespeare' as 'Shaking a spear.'"—from the draft of a guide to analyzing school books by Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development.

# California Textbook Guidelines in Action

By Connie Young Yu

In 1964 the California Curriculum Commission adopted guidelines for the treatment of ethnic and cultural minorities in textbooks in accordance with the Senate Concurrent Resolution of 1962. The guidelines stated that "Textbooks must be free of bias and prejudice and . . . must accurately portray the participation of minority groups in American life."

Since this law was passed, thousands of racist and sexist texts have been adopted for use in California classrooms. Textbook companies started publishing books that referred to Asian American history and culture but they still perpetuated old myths, stereotypes and distortions. The fault lay not in the wording of laws and codes, but in other factors: The racist attitudes of our society, the profit-orientation of the publishing industry, and the individuals screening the books who lacked both the necessary awareness and the time to read hundreds of texts each year.

In 1975, the California adoption system was changed to represent more citizens—specifically, more women and minorities, as well as a greater diversity of careers and experience. Instead of the previous Curriculum Commission of 14 political appointees, over 80 people from many communities now serve on panels of five or six throughout the state and evaluate different groups of books. Through their participation in the textbook adoption process, they in turn are increasing awareness in their own school districts and communities about racist and sexist attitudes which must be eliminated in the classroom.

The panel of the Legal Compliance Committee of which I am presently a member is composed of a Black male counselor, a white female educator, a female Chinese lawyer, a male Jewish realtor, a female Puerto Rican counselor and myself—a Chinese American historian. Our discussions of textbook content have been thought-provoking and consciousness-raising; each person brings a different perspective and awareness to the panel. After several meetings spent studying the codes and looking over scores of textbooks, we developed a sense of what to look for.

We all agreed that, with few exceptions, publishers were not making a conscious effort to involve minorities. Many companies had simply colored in faces in the hope of getting a passing rating. Being in the San Francisco area, we were especially sensitive to omissions of Asian American images and references. Several San Francisco schools are composed largely of Chinese students—new immigrants as well as fifth and sixth generation Chinese Americans. To these children the average textbook portrayal of U.S. society was remote from their reality. We ruled in non-compliance books which had no Asian images or characters and references that were demeaning or offensive to Asians.

Negative rulings were usually appealed by the publishers before a panel of seven people, most often composed of chairpersons from different panels throughout the state. The experience of serving on an appeals panel was an eye-opener and, after serving, I resolved to scrutinize more closely the next stack of books submitted for adoption.

At the hearings I attended, representatives from more than a dozen publishing companies were all white—although one claimed to be "half-Indian" when defending a book which was cited for derogating Native Americans. Almost all of the representatives were male. Defending their books vigorously, most described the care and effort they had invested in publishing multicultural texts. A few accused the Legal Compliance Committee of being "picky." One lost his cool completely and stated: "If this book is rejected, it'll affect the whole series, and we'll lose $200,000."

Discussing a series of books in which Asian children have slanted lines for eyes, the publisher's representative argued that the line drawings exaggerated the ethnic features of *every* racial group. Directing his comments to me he said, "An artist could do such a rendering looking at you, couldn't he?"

Fortunately, the panel voted these books down and were, for the most part, consistent in ruling out other books with racist content. Although the publishers are entitled to a second appeal before the Curriculum Commission, many of them felt discouraged. I would like to think a few had learned something. Several publishers agreed with the panel's findings and withdrew their textbooks. A case in point was one widely used series in which a second-grade story contained drawings of a grinning, slant-eyed, egg-yolk-yellow Chinese servant wearing a mandarin costume and bowing with hands in his sleeves.

### "What Do You People Want?"

The rhetorical question I felt many publishers were bursting to ask was: "What do you people want, anyway?" I would answer that question as follows:

We'd like our children to see positive visual images of themselves in textbook illustrations. Asian children suffer the ridicule of having white children pull up their eyes in mockery. Publishers should note how the Chinese draw themselves in children's

books from the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong or Taiwan. In those books, children are shown as bright-eyed and varied looking, not as look-alikes.

Stories that deal with racist situations should more often give the point of view of the minority child. One story focused only on the white children's attitudes, dwelling on dities such as "Chinky Chinaman." Instead of portraying a Chinese person positively and realistically, only a stereotype was presented. Children needn't learn *new* racist slurs from textbooks, even those written to illustrate a point.

We want no more condescending, patronizing stories of poor oppressed minorities who need white heroes to bail them out of trouble. Stories should deal with the minority peoples themselves and how they struggle and solve their problems in the society they live in.

A minimum of dragons, please. Most of the stories we reviewed about Chinese Americans involved dragons. There's more to Chinatown than Chinese New Year and mythical creatures. Stories should deal with the situations real people experience living in ghettos and discuss why there are Chinatowns in the first place.

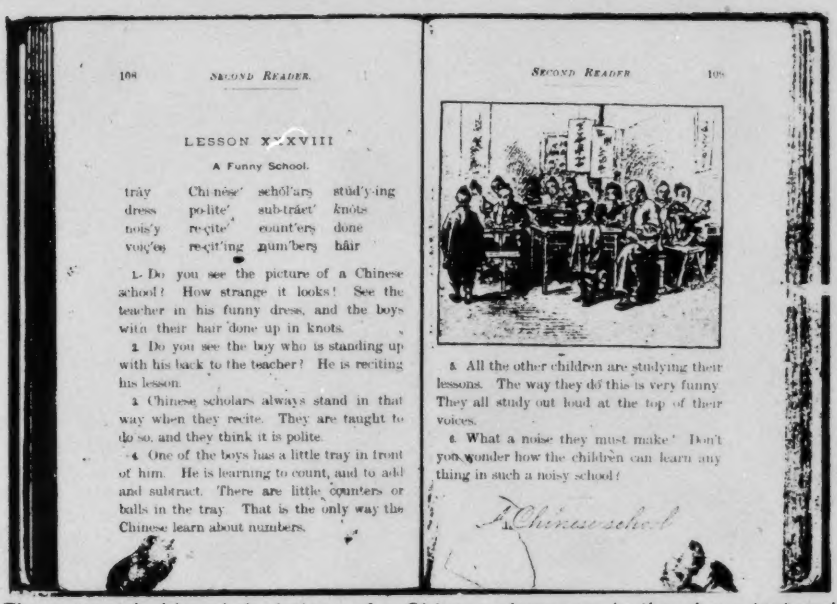
Old Chinese fairy tales are fine, but they should not substitute for material about contemporary Asian Americans. A book which only refers to the root culture further confuses children who don't think of Asians as Americans and contributes to Asian Americans feeling like perpetual foreigners in the U.S.

### "Oriental" Is Demeaning

"Oriental" is an outdated word to describe yellow people. It evokes images of the "exotic Orient," travel, spices, silk, jade. *Asia* and *Asian* are positive terms. Just as browns and blacks are proud of being labeled by color, many younger Asians feel good about calling themselves yellow Americans. (*Yellow* should never be used to denote cowardice.)

Religions other than Christianity should be mentioned. One book listed only Christian holidays for children to learn to spell. Many Chinese and Japanese Americans are of the Buddhist or other Asian faiths.

Historical references to Chinese Americans should not mince the hard, cold facts such as the massacres of



108 SECOND READER.

LESSON XXXVIII

A Funny School.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| trāy | Chi-nēse' | schōl'ars | stūd'y-ing |
| dress | po-lite' | sub-trăct' | knŏts |
| nois'y | re-cīte' | count'ers | done |
| voic'es | re-cit'ing | num'bers | hăir |

1. Do you see the picture of a Chinese school? How strange it looks! See the teacher in his funny dress, and the boys with their hair done up in knots.

2. Do you see the boy who is standing up with his back to the teacher? He is reciting his lesson.

3. Chinese scholars always stand in that way when they recite. They are taught to do so, and they think it is polite.

4. One of the boys has a little tray in front of him. He is learning to count, and to add and subtract. There are little counters or balls in the tray. That is the only way the Chinese learn about numbers.

SECOND READER 109

5. All the other children are studying their lessons. The way they do this is very funny. They all study out loud at the top of their voices.

6. What a noise they must make! Don't you wonder how the children can learn anything in such a noisy school?

*The extremely biased depictions of a Chinese classroom in the above text and illustration from* Swinton's Second Reader *of 1882 have been replaced by more subtle racism in today's books.*

Chinese during "Yellow Peril" days, exclusion laws, alien land laws, discriminatory ordinances and taxes and the segregation of Asians in housing, education and employment. In discussing the Chinese Exclusion Law one history text said it lasted only ten years when it was actually 61 years. The whole history of America's institutionalized racism toward Asians must be told and discussed in the classroom. Executive Order 9066, which sent Japanese Americans to relocation camps during World War II, was not an isolated incident; it was preceded by a long history of harrassment of Japanese, Chinese and other Asians in the U.S. Asians could not be naturalized citizens until 1943 because of the Chinese Exclusion Law of 1882. In many communities in the early West, Chinese children were not allowed to attend public schools. In San Francisco in the early part of the twentieth century, Chinese children could attend only the "Oriental school." Chinese children in parts of the South were forbidden to attend white schools, and the Chinese set up their own.

All children should be given the chance to empathize with Asian American characters and other minorities. Stories by Asian Americans should appear in textbooks. Lawrence Yep's novel *Dragonwings* is a good example of an exciting, dramatic story involving a young Chinese American character in a historic setting. Children read the book from the point of view of the boy Moonshadow and learn of his struggles against racism and poverty in California at the turn of the century.

### Breaking the Ethnocentric Mold

Publishers must learn to break the ethnocentric mold of their books on all levels. In language skills books, children should read names such as Lim and Fong, Okano and Akimo as well as Smith and Jones. Children should be exposed to names of *all* nationalities in textbooks. Despite gains by minorities in equal rights and employment and the appearance of minorities in the media, children still have a very limited view of who is an American.

Publishers and educators should view the inclusion of Asian American history and culture not just as a concession to minority pressure. Asian American history is important to *all* Americans, for it has affected the whole of U.S. society.

For example, in 1862 a Chinese resident named Lin Sing brought action to the Supreme Court of California to recover the sum of $5, two months of the poll tax levied on aliens. He won his case, thereby setting a precedent. In 1880, a laun-

dryman named Yick Wo fought all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court and won the right to operate his business despite a discriminatory ordinance. Such incidents should be presented as integral parts of American history.

Achievements of Asian Americans (such as Chinese construction of the Central Pacific Railroad) are often called "contributions," rather than accomplishments. Asian Americans should not be presented as gaining acceptance in America by "contributing" while white Americans *build, forge* and *achieve*. This double standard implies that the U.S. belongs exclusively to white people and that people of color must pay an entrance fee to prove their loyalty. Similarly, the Chinese publisher Ng Poon Chew was described in one text as the "Mark Twain of his people," and Lue Gin Gong, who created a new variety of oranges in Florida, has been labeled the "Chinese Burbank." Children should learn about these people as achievers in their own right, not as imitations of white heroes.

We want publishers to really involve Asian Americans in textbooks, not include token bits of history or occasional references. Such cultural segregation is perpetuated in classroom programs as well. Many school districts set aside a week for the Chinese during Chinese New Year, inviting local Chinese residents to demonstrate brush painting or stir-frying in a wok. Then they forget about Chinese American culture and history for the rest of the year, feeling they have already fulfilled their Asian requirement.

While deeply ingrained societal attitudes and habits cannot be changed overnight, we must work toward eliminating prejudice in future generations. An effective step against racism in the classroom is the participation of educators, parents and concerned people in the textbook adoption process, either on the local or state level. We must take responsibility for what our children read in school.

**About the Author**

*Connie Young Yu is a writer on Asian American history and culture and a member of the California Board of Education's committee to evaluate textbooks. She is also a member of a collective which produces "Dupont Guy," a San Francisco radio program on the Chinese American community.*

# Setting the Record Straight: Recommended Reading

The following books and materials will provide readers with background information and insights necessary to counteract the stereotypes and distortions so frequently encountered in children's books. Many of the books are suitable for assigned reading in high school and college courses and can be adapted by teachers for younger age levels.

## GENERAL

### Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers

edited by Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada and Shawn Hsu Wong.
Howard University Press, 1974

Representative selections from works of the most important Asian American writers—including novelists, poets, short story writers and playwrights. The 50 pages of introduction are extremely valuable and provide a good background to works written in English. Immigrant literature in Asian languages must await more translators' toils, but this volume is a dramatic step forward in presenting "our voice."

### Asian America: A Special Issue of the "Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars"

Fall 1972, Vol. 4, No. 3 (604 Mission St., Rm. 1001, San Francisco, Cal.)

This is, in part, a forerunner of *Aiiieeeee!* and includes the long introduction to that work. It also has a valuable historical survey of Chinese American progressive organizations by H.M. Lai. The *BCAS* was established by students and scholars of Asia who felt that an alternative was needed to counter traditional Asian studies scholarship with anti-imperialist research. Born in opposition to U.S. intervention in Vietnam, it continues to publish interesting and well-researched articles on Asia.

### Asian American Experience

3 vols. by Lloyd Inui and Franklin Odo.
(Long Beach), 1974

Written to provide Los Angeles School District's teachers with a basic in-service course on Asian Americans. Volume one is a syllabus in 16 sections covering historical development and contemporary issues of Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean and Pacific Islander (Guamanian and Samoan) communities. Volume two is a collection of articles concentrating on the last three ethnic groups on whom relatively little literature is accessible. Volume three is an instructor's manual with suggested discussion questions and useful guide to audio-visual materials.

### Asian Americans: Psychological Perspectives

edited by Stanley Sue and Nathaniel Wagner.
Science and Behavior Books (Palo Alto, Cal.), 1973

Collection of articles on Chinese, Japanese and Filipinos. Many are more sociological than psychological, and the quality varies widely. Some appear to be included more because there was "nothing better" on the topic than for intrinsic merit. Still, a useful introduction to a complex area including the questions of psychological stress in adapting to racism.

### The Asian in the West

by Stanford Lyman.
University of Nevada (Reno), 1970

A collection of articles on the Chinese and Japanese experience. Topics range widely from Chinese secret societies in Canada to an analysis of the Nisei (second generation Japanese Americans) character to an account of the now defunct Red Guard Party of San Francisco's Chinatown. One of the earliest and best scholarly anthologies.

### Asian Women

by Asian Women's Journal.
University of California (Berkeley), 1971

Thought-provoking collection of historical, analytical and personal articles, art work, photos, poetry and short stories expressing the opinions and consciousness of Asian women. Interviews and poetry are especially interesting, as is the undercurrent of compassion/contrast with the white feminist movement.

### Contracts and Conflicts: The Asian Immigration Experience

Asian American Studies Center Resource Development and Publications, University of California at Los Angeles, 1975

A short but excellent collection of articles, photos, illustrations and comic strips

which focus on the role that Asians and other immigrant groups played in the American historical scene and its effects on present-day Asian Americans.

### A Grain of Sand

a record by Chris Iijima,
Nobuko Miyamoto and Charlie Chin.
Paredon Records (Brooklyn, N.Y.)

Music for the struggle by Asian Americans. Valuable record of a group, no longer together, which developed out of the Asian American movement. The group traveled across the country, performing with student and community organizations and providing, like modern troubadors, both a communications network and original music reflecting the reality of those late '60's and early '70's.

### Roots: An Asian American Reader

edited by Amy Tachiki, Eddie Wong,
Franklin Odo and Buck Wong.
Asian American Studies Center,
University of California at
Los Angeles, 1971

A reader divided into three sections. History, community and identity. It contains a variety of materials written from a multitude of perspectives and provides a good introduction to the Asian American experience.

An excellent catalog of audio-visual materials is available from the UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 3232 Campbell Hall, Los Angeles, Cal. 90024.

## Chinese American

### Longtime Californ': A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown

by Victor G. Nee and Brett de Bary.
Pantheon Books, 1972.

Based on hundreds of interviews with San Francisco Chinatown's people, this is the best single volume on the subject. Transcribed sections of the interviews are preceded by narrative introductions—all divided into five major sections including "The Bachelor Society," "Refugees" and "Radicals and the New Vision." Readable and valuable.

### Chinese Working People in America

by Wei Min She Labor Committee.
United Front Press (Cal.), 1974

A pictorial history focusing on Chinese working people that will go a long way towards countering the myths of Chinese Americans as subhuman coolie slaves and as "unorganizable and apathetic." Such stereotyping has historically driven a wedge between Chinese American workers and others.

## A FUNNY THING HAPPENED WHILE I WAS SCREAMING AIIIEEEEE!*

**by Shawn H. Wong**

In 1970, writers Frank Chin, Jeffery Chan, Lawson Inada and I came together to compile the first anthology of Asian American writing. Our method of searching out Asian American writers was to have our students comb the card catalog at the University of California Library at Berkeley for every Asian name they could find or scan the shelves of used-book stores for the distinctive bamboo lettering publishers are so fond of. When we found writers who were still living, we'd call them up and invite ourselves over. Then those writers would tell us about other writers they knew.

Much of our early research went into a high school textbook called *Asian American Authors* (edited by Kai-Yu Hsu, Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1972), history's first anthology of Asian American writing. Shortly after its publication, I received an announcement from the Council on Interracial Books for Children that they would award $500 to the best unpublished Asian American children's book. During 1972, I owned a car that really needed that prize money. With one published poem in *Asian American Authors* and one article on cross-country skiing being the extent of my literary career, I was arrogant enough to believe that if I entered the contest I would win it. I wrote a six-page story two days before the deadline and sent off my "manuscript" by special delivery. I waited. Several months later, a letter arrived from the Council saying something to the effect that my story didn't conform to any of the rules but merited a special award, which they invented called the "Special Award." No money.

After that, I thought I was taking New York by storm so the Chin, Chan, Inada and Wong gang invaded the Park Avenue offices of New York's largest publisher and dropped the manuscript of *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian American Writers* on the desk of a famous editor. Mr. Famous Editor took us out to lunch at the Century Club. We went home talking about "big money" and how my car would finally get its valve job. A few weeks later, Mr. Famous Editor wrote:

> It isn't enough to celebrate it [the writing] merely because it is by Asian American writers. . . . The suggestion here is that you take a much harder look at the kind of anthology you want. . . . In the present collection the least ethnic pieces are the best. In other words, you as editors must assume a great deal more responsibility than you have in the collection you've given me. My interest goes on, but I think for your maiden voyage, this book must be more commanding and have more to say than it presently does.

Over the next two years, our anthology was turned down by six of the finest publishers, usually with insulting comments about our language. One publisher suggested we drop the "literary devices" and do the anthology as straight historical narrative.

During this time, I came home one day and found a letter from Roberta Palm of Howard University Press. She had heard from the CIBC that I had an "award winning manuscript." Of course there was no manuscript, only six pages which had since been turned into the beginnings of an adult novel. I asked Ms. Palm if she would be interested in publishing *Aiiieeeee!* The rest is a success story. The book received rave reviews in *The New York Times, Rolling Stone, The New Yorker, The Nation, New Republic, The Chicago Sun Times, Essence,* etc. and was released last year in paperback by Doubleday.

*The "pushers of white American culture . . . pictured the yellow man as something that when wounded, sad, or angry, or swearing, or wondering whined, shouted, or screamed 'aiiieeeee!' Asian America, so long ignored and forcibly excluded from creative participation in American culture, is wounded, sad, angry, swearing, and wondering, and this is his AIIIEEEEE!!! It is more than a whine, shout, or scream. It is fifty years of our whole voice."—from *Aiiieeeee!*

## FILIPINE AMERICAN

### Republic or Empire

by Daniel Boone Schirmer.
Schenkman Publishers (N.Y.), 1970

Analyzes the U.S. expansion into the Philippines and the response of the Filipino Independence Movement.

### The Making of a Filipino

by Renato Constantino.
Taka Publishing Services
(Quezon City, Filipines), 1971

Portrays the development of Filipino Nationalism, focusing on one nationalist, Claro Mayo Recto, and his struggle for the independence of his country from the U.S.

## JAPANESE AMERICAN

### East Across the Pacific

by Hilary Conroy and
Miyakawa T. Scott.
American Bibliographic
Center (Santa Barbara), 1972

Essays on the Japanese Americans from immigration to the United States to sociological studies of acculturation and assimilation. The twelve articles are uneven in quality, and the anthology itself suffers from lack of a cohesive framework—although it still represents the best work of its kind.

### Prejudice, War and the Constitution

by Jacobus Tenbroek, Edward N. Barnhart and Floyd W. Matson.
University of California Press (Berkeley), 1954

An extensively documented, three-part history and analysis covering West Coast anti-Asianism from 1849-1942, the World War II Japanese American experience and the role of the U.S. courts throughout the war period. As the authors point out, many constitutional and political issues not only remain unresolved but continue to arise with recurrent crises.

### The Spoilage

by Dorothy Thomas and
Richard Nishimoto
University of California
Press (Berkeley), 1946

An account—based on the records of social scientists and of relocation camp inmates—of the erosion of Japanese American civil and human rights as U.S. citizens during the World War II period. Among the issues discussed are the repressive measures of government agencies, including martial law, incarceration and internment, and Japanese American protests against these repressions.

## KOREAN AMERICAN

### Korean American Writings

edited by Brenda Paik Sunoo.
Insight (New York), 1975

This collection from the Korean American bi-monthly publication *Insights* provides a political and historical perspective of Korean Americans. It includes "essays, editorials, interviews and poetry about community concerns and the overseas patriotic movement."

## PERIODICALS

Text is in English unless otherwise noted.

Amerasia Journal (irregular), Asian American Studies Center, 3232 Campbell Hall, UCLA, Los Angeles, Cal. 90024.

Asian Americans for Action (bimonthly), United Asian Communities Center, 43 W. 28 St., New York, N.Y. 10001.

Asian Americans for Equal Employment Newsletter (irregular),in Chinese and English, 1 East Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10002.

Asian American Review (irregular), Asian American Studies, 3407 Dwinelle Hall, Berkeley, Cal. 94720.

Bridge (bimonthly), Basement Workshop, 199 Lafayette St., New York, N.Y. 10012.

Chinese Affirmative Action Newsletter (monthly), in English and Chinese, 699 Clay St., San Francisco, Cal. 94111.

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Additional information may be obtained from the organizations listed below:

Visual Communications
Asian American Studies Central, Inc.
1601 Griffith Park Blvd.
Los Angeles, Cal. 90026

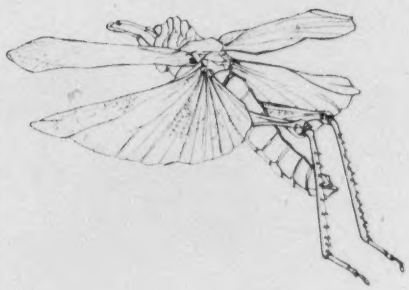
UCLA Asian American Studies Center
3232 Campbell Hall
Los Angeles, Cal. 90024

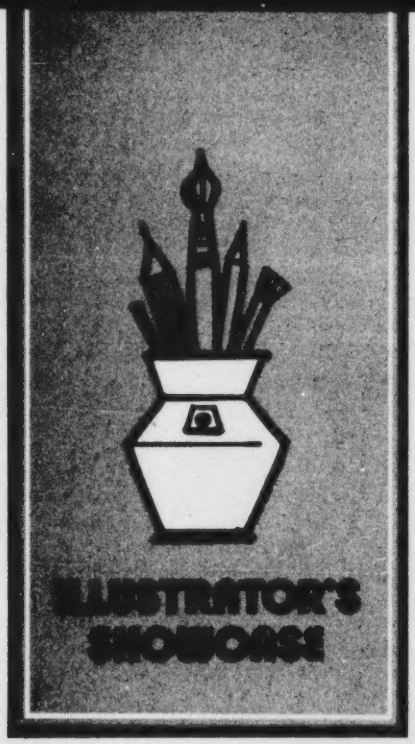
Japanese American Curriculum Project
P.O. Box 367
San Mateo, Cal. 94401

Chinese Media Committee of the
Chinese for Affirmative Action
699 Clay St.
San Francisco, Cal. 94111

*This resource list was prepared by the Asian American Children's Book Project and annotated by Franklin Odo of the Asian American Studies Department, California State University, Long Beach.*

**Arlan Huang,** who has a BFA from Pratt Institute, is a free-lance artist who has done posters, calendars, album covers, etc. His illustrations have appeared in such publications as *Bridge: The Asian-American Magazine* and *Yellow Pearl.* Mr. Huang can be reached at Squid Frames, 163 Bleecker St., New York, N.Y. 10012; tel.: (212) 260-1455.

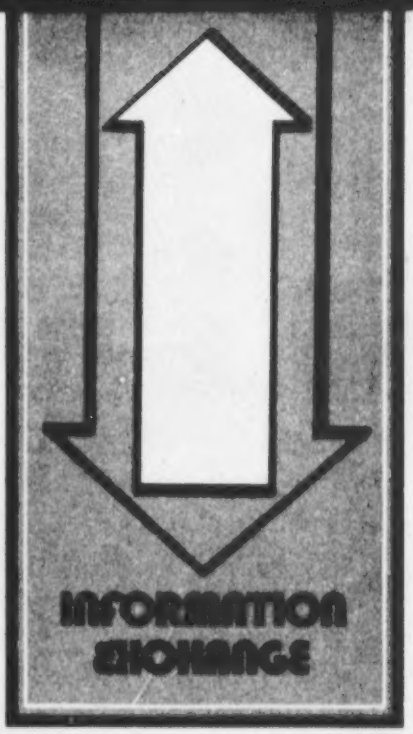





This department brings the work of minority illustrators to the attention of art directors and book and magazine editors. Artists are invited to submit their portfolios for consideration.

**Alan A. Okada,** a graphic artist and designer, graduated from the City College of New York. The art director of *Bridge: The Asian-American Magazine,* his illustrations have appeared in that magazine, *Yellow Pearl, Chinatown Children's Coloring Book* and other publications. He has done design and production work for such groups as the Sierra Club, Asian Americans for a Fair Media and Cityarts Workshop. Mr. Okada can be reached at 56-14 Woodside Ave., Woodside, N.Y. 11377; tel.: (212) 466-6263.

**Tomie Arai,** who studied at the Philadelphia College of Art, is a graphic artist and muralist whose work has appeared in such publications as *Yellow Pearl, An Asian-American Anthology, Bridge: The Asian-American Magazine,* and *Chinatown Children's Coloring Book.* She does free-lance work for other magazines and community organizations and has been a technical assistant for the New York State Council on the Arts. Ms. Arai can be reached at Cityarts Workshop, 58 Ludlow St., New York, N.Y. 10002; tel.: (212) 673-8670.




**The new Asian American Bilingual** Center has just published the first issue of their bilingual newsletter. The work of the center in developing **bilingual/multicultural** curricula for Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean and Samoan children will be written up in future issues. For more information write to the Center at 2168 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, Cal. 94704.

**The Amherst Asian American** Education Committee has asked us to inform our readers that their workshop resource packet listed in the *Bulletin* (Vol.6, No.7) has gone up in price to $3 for individuals, $5 for institutions. The Committee's address remains PO Box 370, Amherst, Mass. 01059.

**Instructions on** how to make and play a variety of **non-western games**—including many which originated in Asian countries—have been collected into a 20-page booklet, *Your Move!*. The games are suitable for the elementary classroom as well as for older children. For more information, write The Center for Open Learning and Teaching, 178 Tamalpais Rd., Berkeley, Cal. 94708.

**The Service Center** for Teachers of Asian Studies of Ohio State University publishes *Focus*, a newsletter containing recommended resources for elementary and secondary teachers of **Asian Studies.** The tri-annual publication is available for 75¢ for single copies or $2 per year (checks should be made payable to the university). Write to the Center, Association for Asian Studies, Ohio State University, 28 West Woodruff Ave., Columbus, Ohio 43210.

**The Association for** Childhood Education has reprinted a series of articles on **sex-stereotyping in education.** The 32-page publication, *Growing Free: Overcoming Sex-Role Stereotypes*, is available for $1 (plus 10¢ postage) from the Association, 3615 Wisconsin Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20016.

**The latest issue** of the *Mountain Review* includes an article entitled "Mountain Language and the English Classics" on the problem of **dialects and discrimination.** The quarterly publication, dedicated to themes related to life in Appalachia, is available at the subscription price of $5/year; individual copies including back issues cost $1.50. Write *Mountain Review*, Box 743-A, Whitesburg, Ky. 41858.

**Proyecto Leer** has resumed publication of its semi-annual bulletin. Future issues will include a bibliography of **Spanish-language** library materials, available to bilingual educators and librarians from publishers in Spain, Latin America and the U.S. The bulletin is distributed free. Write 1736 Columbia Rd. NW, Washington, D.C. 10009.

**The Advisory and Learning Exchange** issues a newsletter with a schedule of their own **education** workshops, as well as a listing of other conferences and meetings in the Washington area on the subject of children in primary and secondary schools. For the free newsletter write to the group at 1133 15th St. N.W., Suite 100, Washington, D.C. 20005.

**Recent issues of** *The Publication: Children in Contemporary Society*, put out by the Pittsburgh Area Preschool Association, have concentrated on such subjects as **young children** and legal issues, divorce and death. $5 a year (quarterly); write Mary Frank, PO Box 11173, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15237.

**"New Directions for Women,"** a feminist publication originating in Dover, New Jersey, covers news from the women's movement nationally. The subscription price of the quarterly is $3 from New Directions, Box 27, Dover, N.J. 07801.

**"Young Children"** is the bimonthly journal of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The March, 1976, issue includes an article about Florida's early learning program for **migrant children.** The annual subscription price of $10 should be mailed to the NAEYC, 1834 Connecticut Ave, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

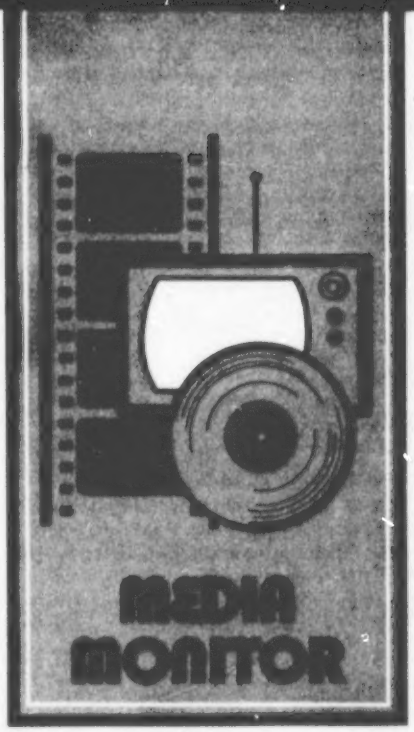
**Joyce White Mills,** a university instructor of children's literature and ethnic material, has edited a **bibliography of children's books,** *The Black World in Literature for Children.* The booklet can be ordered for $2 from Ms. Mills, School of Library Service, Atlanta University, Atlanta, Ga. 30314.

**The new 8-page** edition of the *Gay Bibliography* containing 200 nonfiction titles selected by the **Task Force on Gay Liberation** of the American Library Association is available for 25¢ (5 copies, $1; 6-30 copies, 15¢ each; 31+, 12¢ each). Write Barbara Gittings, Box 2383, Philadelphia, Pa. 19103 (checks should be made payable to "Barbara Gittings—TFGL").

**A catalog** of **non-sex-stereotyped toys** includes a listing for one of the few Black male dolls on the market (16" tall, $19). The catalog (and a reprint of an article on sex role stereotypes) can be ordered for $1 from Toys That Care And Other Items, Inc., PO Box 81, Briarcliff Manor, N.Y. 10510.

**We are advised** that the Music Center in Los Angeles will make hand-sewn male and female **dolls** (with anatomically realistic bodies) to represent Blacks and other minorities. Cost each is $22 from the Music Center, 5373 West Pico Blvd., Los Angeles, Cal. 90019.

**The guidebook** to teaching **oral history**, *You Never Hear About Any Struggles*, is not available from the Charles Kerr Publishing Company, as we erroneously reported in the last issue of the *Bulletin*, but from the Illinois Labor History Society Book Department, Box 914, Chicago, Ill. 60690.




*In the last* Bulletin, *we noted the interest readers have expressed in our expanding our coverage to include the electronic media. We are pleased to inaugurate our treatment of this subject with "Media Monitor," a new* Bulletin *department.*

*Next time you sit down in front of the tube, go to a movie or look at an advertisement—be an* active *watcher! We welcome your comments, particularly with regard to children's movies and on-going TV programs.*

With the nationwide telecast on March 11, 1976, of a television film adaptation of James and Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's novel *Farewell to Manzanar,* the subject of the U.S. government's internment of 110,000 Japanese Americans during World War II received some long overdue national attention.

However, the main focus of discussion up to this point has been the film itself, with a controversy continuing to rage on the West and East coasts as to how accurately it depicts the concentration camp episode. Criticisms of the film (produced by Korty Films, Inc., the same outfit that brought Ernest J. Gaines' *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* to the TV screen) range from the mild—"a deeply moving . . . drama marred by several distortions and omissions"—to the vociferous. Wrote playwright Frank Chin in an open letter to producer John Korty: "Your 'Farewell to Manzanar' is the most despicable, self-righteous white racist version of Japanese America in American film. . . . You have lovingly removed white racism from the issue of the concentration camps. . . ." After commending Korty for creating a screenplay that was "a vast improvement over the book," Nisei Raymond Okamura criticized it on several counts, writing in *New Dawn* (a West Coast publication):

> The screenplay contains a conscious attempt to portray Caucasians as kind and sympathetic. . . . The romantic interlude involving Richard Wakatsuki and Lois, a Caucasian volunteer, is unrealistic and ignores the anti-miscegenation laws in effect at that time. . . . One sequence erroneously leads the viewer to believe that public hysteria following Pearl Harbor was the cause for the internment. In historic fact, the Japanese exclusion movement began 50 years earlier. . . . Pearl Harbor was only a convenient pretext for West Coast exclusionists to impose a "final solution to the oriental problem. . . ."

Okamura also points out that while the Tule Lake camp—the setting for "Manzanar"—was the center for "protesters, resisters and renunciants (the 'no-no' people) . . . Manzanar eventually became the center for the cooperators, accommodators, and loyalists. . . . Even today, Japanese Americans have strong feelings about the distinction, and the two camps should not be confused nor amalgamated." The Southern California Manzanar Committee, a community-based group, complained that input from their members as advisors during production of the film was thwarted and/or ignored, although Edison T. Uno, an unpaid consultant on the project, vouched for producer Korty's "warm, compassionate sensitivity to the community."

The most interesting response to the film, in view of the questions it raises, is that of Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, co-author of the book. In a letter to the Los Angeles *Pacific Citizen* newspaper, Ms. Houston stated in part: "My sisters and brothers and other relatives of the Wakatsuki family have . . . expressed their confidence that John Korty made every effort to do an honest film. If my parents were living, I know that they too would be proud of the result." Ms. Houston also expresses regret that Korty has been "libeled in print" and called a white racist. It seems reasonable to presume from Ms. Houston's letter that she regards the film as being faithful to the substance of her novel. If so, what does that suggest about the character of the novel itself and about the implications of its selection for film daptation?

A review of the novel, *Farewell to Manzanar* (on page 20), states:

> Perhaps the greatest tragedy of the camp episode was the irreparable psychological damage done to some Niseis, as evidenced by the author's constant apology for her Japanese heritage. . . . Instead of expressing outrage at the U.S. government's racism . . . she has fully assimilated the white American perspective regarding U.S. society's atrocious treatment of its minorities.

Taking a cue from the above judgment and from T. Kusunoki who wrote in the New York *Nichibei* that "opportunities for network exposure [of the camp experience] are too infrequently offered to be given over to what was essentially a soap opera about how one man's family roughed it like good scouts until the war and people's emotions cooled," it seems fair to speculate on John Korty's reasons for selecting this particular book on the subject for film treatment. As Kusunoki points out, "As the story of one Japanese American family's experience ["Manzanar"] arguably may have validity. But inevitably this family becomes symbolic of all such families when their ordeal . . . is to this day so pitifully little known to most Americans." Could it be that Ms. Houston's brainwashed perspective (the reviewer writes of the novel's "cosmetic approach" to its subject) is just what a media guardian of white America's sensibilities would regard as appropriate for depicting this infamous chapter in the nation's history?

As a critic who reviewed the film version of *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman,* my answer to that question would be yes. In the case of *Pittman,* Korty was confronted with a novel which clearly, though unpolemically, indicts the racism of U.S. society, and it was necessary to distort its inherent messages to make it palatable to whites. Hence, the book's Black teacher/recorder of Jane's story was changed to a white reporter in the film; the final revolutionary words of a sermon were deleted, thus turning it into a passive plea for white acceptance; a vicious slaveholder was turned into a raving yet somehow *benign* fool, etc. By contrast, the Houstons' *Manzanar*

required few alterations, being already tailored to racist specifications.

Korty and others might fairly ask whether any other materials on the camp experience are available for film adaptation. In fact, there are several excellent historical sources available which could have been drawn upon and a fictional story created around. But even in the absence of alternative sources, the makers of "Farewell to Manzanar" could have, had they chosen to, enhanced the substance of their film. States Karl Yoneda (a technical advisor on the project), writing in the New York *Nichibei:*

> The movie could have been enhanced if some of my suggestions had been seriously considered and used, such as showing "Jap Hunting License" posters; "Anti-Jap" press headlines of the day; . . . and . . . a projected close-up of the State Historical Plaque on the Manzanar entrance guardhouse containing the words, " . . . CONCENTRATION CAMPS . . . AS A RESULT OF HYSTERIA, RACISM AND ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION."
>
> Other vital facts which could have been included are that Manzanar medical chief, Dr. John Bowden's pay was $340 per month, while Nisei doctors received only $19; that the purpose of the 14 Manzanar Nisei myself included, volunteering for U.S. Military Intelligence Service in the Pacific . . . was not so much to prove our loyalty, but rather the strong conviction that the fascist Axis—Germany, Italy and Japan—had to be defeated . . . ; That the December 6, 1942 riot was not just over "missing sugar" but was the result of . . . dissatisfaction caused mainly by WRA administration personnel who had racist attitudes toward "camp residents". . . .

Concluding his article, Mr. Yoneda says: "The Manzanar story continues to exist on the Indian reservations, in the ghettos, in unemployment . . . and other racist policies of U.S. imperialism. A lesson gained from this film *should be* the need to work together toward eradicating racism forever" [italics added]. Will this, indeed, be the lesson that is learned given the film's equivocal treatment of the Manzanar outrage? Or will the film stand as one more document which, in the absence of supplementary material or commentary, contributes to miseducating young people about the nature of the society in which they live?

We note with some discomfort the National Education Association's official recognition of the film (it will bear an NEA seal of approval) to encourage its use in public schools and libraries. 16mm prints are currently being prepared for rental distribution. In a letter addressed to the "Cast, Crew and Community of 'Farewell to Manzanar,'" John Korty wrote: "One of the stated purposes of this production has been to renew public discussion of the camps, to make the strongest film possible for the largest audience possible, to thereby open the door for sharper and more diverse statements." In our view, this stated objective would not have any possibility of realization unless educators and librarians use the opportunity of the film's screening to further enlighten youngsters about the concentration camp episode. It is imperative that they make the film's showing a consciousness-raising experience by structuring follow-up discussions in which supplementary materials are used to counter the film's deficiencies.

Finally, we would urge librarians and educators to consider using another film—either in conjunction with "Manzanar" or instead of it: "Subversion," a documentary produced by the Japanese Community Youth Council in San Francisco, is powerful, moving and accurate in its presentation of the facts about the camps. (The film can be rented from the Film Department, KQED-TV, 1011 Bryant St., San Francisco, Cal. 94103 or Asian Americans for Action, 43 W. 28th St., N.Y., N.Y. 10001.

—J.C.B.

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A filmed adaptation of Jade Snow Wong's *Fifth Chinese Daughter* is scheduled for TV presentation on May 10 and is being released to schools nationally by Public Broadcasting Services as part of their "Our Story" series. Having seen the script, we feel it surpasses the original book (see review on page 13) in its stereotypical depiction of Asian American family life. The contrasting of two families—a strict, tradition-bound Chinese American family against an egalitarian white one—is exaggerated out of all proportion to reality.

We wish to alert readers to the program and suggest that teachers and parents ask children to watch the show and be prepared to discuss it. You might stimulate discussion with the following questions:

- Do you believe the Wongs are a typical Chinese American family? (The story is set in the period between 1922 and 1942. Undoubtedly, some Chinese American families during that period resembled the family portrayed. But the Wong family is an exaggeration of numerous Asian American stereotypes. Most viewers are unfamiliar with the variety of Asian American lifestyles.) What stereotypes can you identify? (Very passive mother, very authoritarian father, very obedient daughter, etc.)
- Why does the TV show depict this Christian Chinese family as being "typical"? (In the script, Jade Snow's father is portrayed as a super-devout Christian, about which playwright Frank Chin has this to say: "The Chinese immigrants to America were rarely Christian converts or religious in the white sense of that word. I find the selection of a Christian convert to represent Chinese immigrants in this TV show in appalling bad taste.")
- If the script is not authentic, why was the film selected to depict Asian American life to millions of TV viewers? (Perhaps because whites enjoy having their stereotypes reinforced.) Though autobiographical, the story is written in the third, rather than the first, person. Jade Snow states that the Chinese traditionally consider the use of the word "I" to be immodest. But again, to quote Frank Chin, "Untrue! In Chinese literature there is no such traditional lack of first person usage. Jade Snow Wong made up this 'modesty' bit for her own reasons."
- How does the show portray the status of Chinese and Chinese immigrant women? Is there anything to indicate that the status of Chinese American women and of women in China has changed since the period depicted in the film?

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**It Speaks for Itself:** A member of The Chinese Media Committee of the Chinese for Affirmative Action (see recommended resources, page 32) makes this observation:

> Some apologists would say, "Don't be oversensitive. We have whites who look bad in the movies and on television also." That's true. But for every bad white image there are ten good ones to counterbalance it. The ever-dominant media continues to bombard all of us and our children with type-casting of Asians. Racism continues to feed on these distorted images and is applied to real events. There are reasons why we keep hearing variations of the phrase "Asian lives are cheap." Such a conception, to say the least, is deadly.

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